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HOW TO BECOME A  
GREAT JAZZ IMPROVISER  
FROM THE GROUND UP

By Brent Vaartstra

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*This book is for those who  
love music, want to become  
better jazz musicians, and  
are ready to take action.*

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# How to Use This Book

First off, thanks so much for buying this book! Personally, I could not be more excited for you. I'm 100% confident that you are going to get a ton out of it. But before I formally introduce you to Zero to Improv and everything you will learn, let's talk about **how to use it.**

This book is built from the ground up, meaning I start with the fundamentals and continue building off the concepts in intentional order. If you want to get the very most you can get out of it, I would highly suggest starting from the beginning.

However, this is a great book to reference when in a time of need as well. So feel free to go through it in whatever way feels appropriate for you!

**It's important that you know that you can listen to every example and exercise in this book.**

In your download folder, you will have all of the mp3's for the Exercises I have provided. But as long as you have an internet connection handy, you can **click on any of the musical notation in this book and listen to it.**

Go ahead give it a try!

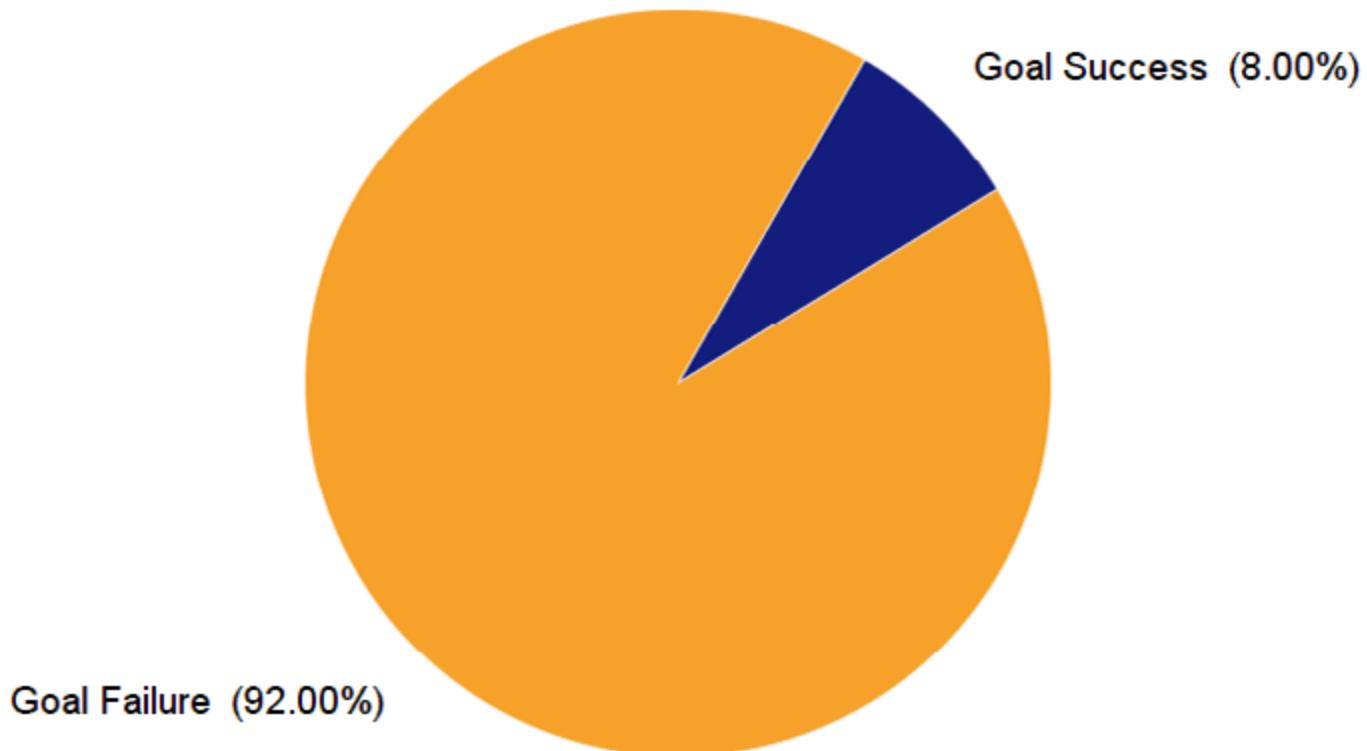


# Getting Started

This is not your regular music book.

**Let me explain:** I find that a lot of instructional music books lead you through a vast amount of information, all great information, but do far more demonstration than calling to action. Quite honestly, many of the music books on my shelf have been used mostly to reference on occasion, and haven't had a profound effect on my musical abilities.

But this music book is going to be different! Not only will I be giving you lots of demonstrations and material, but I will also be asking you to **take action**.



I want to talk about *action* for a second because I believe it's important.

According to a survey of 1,562 respondents conducted by the University of Scranton, only 8% of those who made New Year's Resolutions achieved their goals. That's 92% who failed! That's a lot of talk and no action.

Action is what occurs when we genuinely want something to happen. If we have a good idea, but we don't take action, that means we didn't truly want it. We just liked the idea of it.

I've taught students who genuinely wanted to become better musicians. How did I know? They were taking action. I would give them some work for the week, and they would come back with some serious progress to show. Not perfection, but progress.

I've taught others who liked the idea of it, but when push came to shove, they weren't willing to put the effort in. That's okay! Perhaps it was just not for them.

**So I want you to know upfront:** Becoming a better jazz musician does not come cheap and easy. It takes more than just buying an eBook or a course. It takes work. It takes action.

I've designed this book so that I am always giving you a way to apply the material you are learning. I call them "**Practice Challenges.**" You'll see them throughout the book.

I'm assuming you bought this eBook because you like jazz and want to learn how to play it better. So I know you're up for the challenge! I want you to be one of the 8%.

# My Goals for You

While writing this book, I've had three goals for you in mind. All of the material provided revolves around these three goals. Ultimately, I want you to leave this book getting out of it these things:

- » Learn to navigate your instrument better.
- » Understand jazz language better.
- » Have years and years of practice material to work on.

Pretty simple right? They all play into each other quite nicely. Now you know what I'm trying to help you do as you work through this book.

**But here's the deal:**

My goals for you aren't your goals. Quite honestly, I hope you enjoy this book. But more than that I want you to feel like this book had an impact on your jazz playing. I'll do my part by providing you tangible information and calling you to action, but you'll have to do your part as well!

I want to encourage you to **set goals for your jazz playing**, because setting goals can make all of the difference. In fact, many studies have been conducted, and the results are in: *those who set goals (and write them down) are far more likely to succeed than those who don't*.

**I want you to grab a pencil and paper right now.** Write down where you feel you are at in your jazz playing today, and then write down where you want to be. Don't be afraid to dream big!

Now make sure you hold on to that piece of paper. Post it on your wall, or somewhere you will be reminded of it on a regular basis. If you did this, you're already off to a great start!

I guarantee you that this book is going to help you achieve those goals. How do I know? Because just about everything in this book is things that professional jazz musicians are continually practicing and working on. Which brings us to this...

# What You Will Learn

This book is all about **jazz improvisation** and becoming a better jazz improviser. Improvisation is a foundational element of jazz music, and so this deserves a lot of attention.

Before I go into more specifics of what we will be covering, I want to present to you an important rule that you will see come up time and time again throughout this book:

## The Jazz Improv Rule:

To become a better jazz improviser, you need to understand jazz harmony.

It's a pretty simple rule. If you want to become a better jazz soloist, you have to know how chord progressions work. That's why this book starts from the ground up. It starts with the fundamentals and builds. This is what you will learn:

**Important scales.** How to master them on your instrument, and how to improve your technical ability.

- » **Chord construction.** How to build triads and 7<sup>th</sup> chords and use them to actually improvise.
- » **Scales and their relationship to chords.**
- » **Chord progressions.** Where they come from, how to build them, how to improvise over them, and the important ones you should know.
- » **Jazz repertoire.** How to learn jazz standards and how to improvise over them.
- » **Developing jazz language.** How to conceptualize it and how to learn it by ear.

To supplement your learning process while going through this book, I highly suggest that you are doing the #1 most important thing you can do for your jazz playing: **Listen**.

If you are not listening to jazz, you will never get it. Don't underestimate this!

# Final Thoughts Before You Start

I don't know where you are at in your jazz playing. You could be a beginner, advanced or somewhere in between. Regardless, **this book is for everybody.**

Perhaps you may think you know all of your scales, but that doesn't mean you should skip those sections. There may be some calls to action that you've never tried before, or maybe some review is in order.

When writing this book, I've kept all skill levels in mind. For the beginners, I've made a point to define things clearly and not skip steps. This book is very methodical. It starts with the basics and continues to build off of each concept.

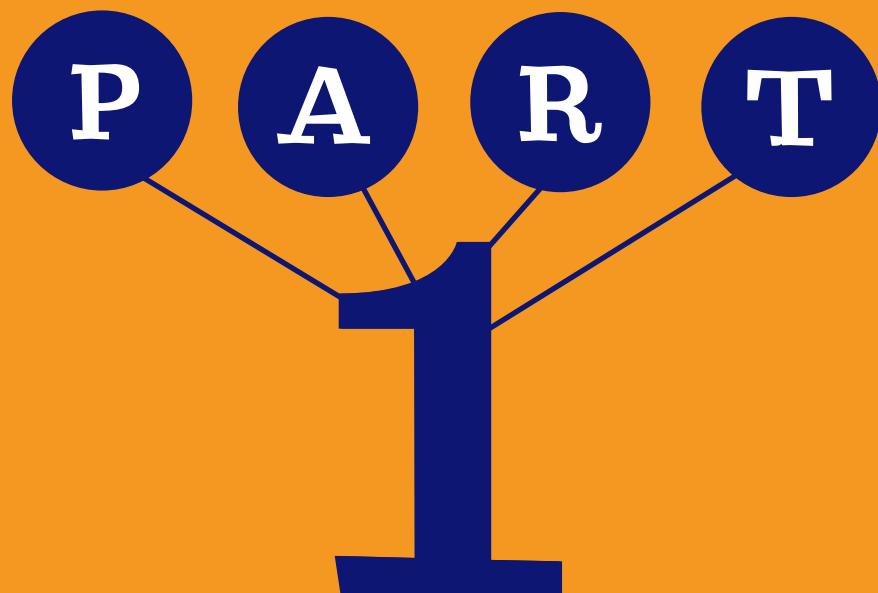
For the advanced players, I've encouraged you to go above and beyond the material on the pages.

## ***Note for Bb Instruments:***

In addition, this book is written for all melodic instruments. In other words, the material isn't written for your instrument specifically. It is composed in such a way that everyone can get immense value out of it. I've made a point to create examples and exercises that respect the ranges of most instruments, but in some cases, you may feel the need to bring some things down or up an octave. There's nothing wrong with that!

So your journey begins! I couldn't be more excited for you to dig into this material. **Remember to take action.** You'll get out of this book what you put into it, and so I encourage you to go all in.

Ready? Here we go!



## Setting the Foundation for Jazz Improvisation

Alright, you made it.

Remember *The Jazz Improv Rule* I just gave you? I'll spare you the task of scrolling back a few pages, because I believe it's worth repeating:

**The Jazz Improv Rule:**

To become a better jazz improviser, you need to understand jazz harmony.

This is what Part 1 is going to be all about. We're going to start from the beginning and start discovering how understanding harmony is the cornerstone of great jazz improvisation...or any kind of musical improvisation for that matter.

# CHAPTER

1

## Scales and How to Use Them

One of the questions I get that makes me cringe the most is “*What scales can I play over... (a dominant 7 chord)*”.

It’s not that scales are bad, or that it’s a dumb question. It’s that thinking about scales as a means to improvise is not the best way to go. To play jazz, one must learn the jazz language. In my opinion, scales are not a proper means to learn jazz language, at least not in the way many musicians seem to use them.

### What scales are useful for:

- » **Learning your instrument.** Scales are essential for learning how to navigate your instrument, understanding chord qualities, how to read music, and other cornerstone elements of learning how to play. If you want to be a good jazz improviser, you need to know your instrument!
- » **Technique.** Scales can help train you to move freely around your instrument without restrictions so that you can execute any musical situation you come across.
- » **Conceptualizing musical ideas.** Scales can help you identify pitch collections that conceptualize a harmonic or melodic concept. Understanding different aspects of music theory can be incredibly helpful.

*For example:* knowing how to play an altered scale can help you identify the notes that make an altered dominant chord an altered dominant chord. Or you can play a minor pentatonic scale a minor third up from the root of the altered dominant, and now you’ve identified all of the altered notes in that chord from an entirely different perspective.

## What scales are bad for:

- » **Learning jazz language.** To learn jazz language, you need to be listening to jazz music and learning solos and smaller musical phrases of the greats by ear. Scales are pitch collections, not musical phrases. They will not help you learn the way jazz musicians speak and communicate with each other.
- » **Learning how to play melodically.** A scale is not a melody. A scale is a set of musical notes ordered by fundamental frequency or pitch (*there's a bland text book definition for you*). To play melodically, you need to learn melodies. Scales can show you what the “right notes” to play are, but they don’t teach you how to create actual music.
- » **Improving your ear.** One of the most important things to be equipped with as a jazz musician is a great ear. To become an extraordinary improviser, you need to be developing your ear.

Scales are calculated, and therefore not great for training your ear. If you are playing a ii-V-I chord progression and you know that you can play the major scale of the I chord over everything, you probably won’t be playing any “wrong notes.” But you also won’t be able to hear the difference between those three chords. Even if you play the appropriate scales over each chord individually, it will still sound calculated.

I want to emphasize that learning scales is not a bad thing when it comes to jazz. In fact, they are incredibly important for the reasons I mentioned above. However, I think it’s important to start our scale studies with this disclaimer.

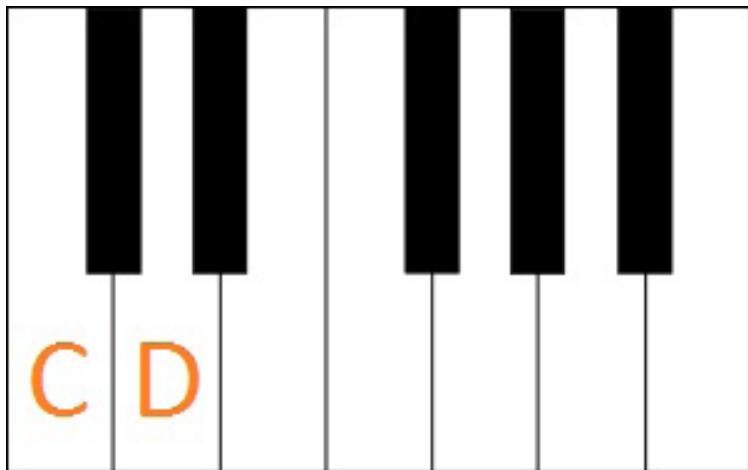
## Basic scales you need to know

Consider this your library of scales to make sure you have in your arsenal. Feel free to come back to these at any time you need! For the sake of simple demonstration, these are all notated in Concert C for C instruments, Bb for Bb instruments, and Eb for Eb instruments). These all span one octave and often repeat the top octave note before descending.

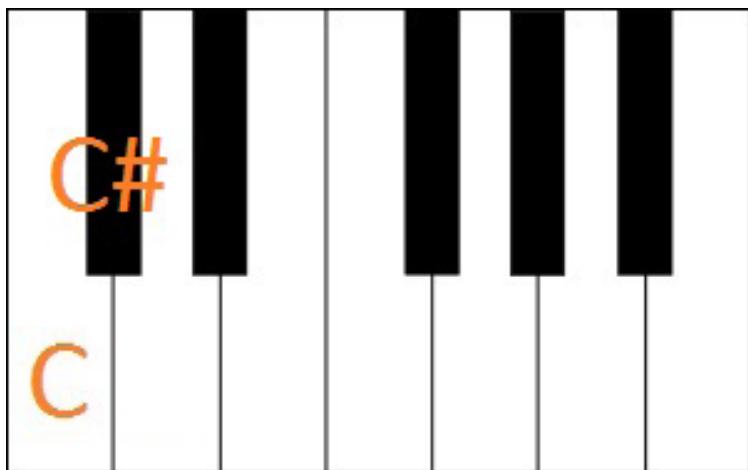
**Remember:** you can click on any of these scales to listen to them, if you have an internet connection.

You will observe that for each scale I give formulas. The intervallic formula is represented in "steps". **W= whole step. H= half step.**

For example, the notes C and D are a whole step away from each other.



And C and C# are a half step away from each other.



# **Major scale**

**Intervallic formula:** W-W-H-W-W-W-H

**Scale tone formula:** 1-2-3-4-5-6-7

**C major scale:** C-D-E-F-G-A-B



# **Minor scales**

There are three basic minor scales to be familiar with: **natural**, **harmonic**, and **melodic**. The fundamental shared characteristic is the flatted 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **Natural minor**

**Intervallic formula:** W-H-W-W-H-W-W

**Scale tone formula:** 1-2-b3-4-5-b6-b7

**C natural minor scale:** C-D-Eb-F-G-Ab-Bb



## Harmonic minor

**Intervallic formula:** W-H-W-W-H-W+H-H

**Scale tone formula:** 1-2-b3-4-5-b6-7

**C harmonic minor scale:** C-D-Eb-F-G-Ab-B



## Melodic minor

**Intervallic formula:** W-H-W-W-W-W-H

**Scale tone formula:** 1-2-b3-4-5-6-7

**C melodic minor scale:** C-D-Eb-F-G-A-B



\* It's important to note that with the melodic minor in classical music, the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> are flattened when the scale descends. Essentially making it a descending natural minor scale. This is unnecessary in a jazz context, so it has been left out.

# Diminished scales

Diminished scales are what we call “octatonic”, meaning they have eight notes in them, as opposed to seven. What’s interesting about diminished scales is that they are symmetrical. They are built from alternating whole steps and half steps, and therefore there are two different ways to play a diminished scale.

You can either start with a half step or a whole step, but you would use them in different contexts. The **Whole Half Diminished Scale** would be used in the context of a diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chord. The **Half Whole Diminished Scale** would be used in the context of a dominant 7<sup>th</sup>(b9) chord. I won’t go into detail about chord-scale relationships right now; that’s for a later chapter! Regardless, I think it’s good to practice both.

## Whole Half Diminished Scale

**Intervallic formula:** W-H-W-H-W-H-W-H

**Scale tone formula:** 1-2-b3-4-#4-#5-6-7-8

**C whole half diminished scale:** C-D-Eb-F-Gb-G#-A-B

A musical staff in G clef with eight notes. The notes are: C, D, Eb, F, Gb, G#, A, B. The intervals between the notes are: whole step, half step, whole step, half step, whole step, half step, whole step, half step.

## Half Whole Diminished Scale

**Intervallic formula:** H-W-H-W-H-W-H-W

**Scale tone formula:** 1-b2-b3-3-#4-5-6-b7-8

**C half whole diminished scale:** C-Db-Eb-E-F#-G-A-Bb

A musical staff in G clef with eight notes. The notes are: C, Db, Eb, E, F#, G, A, Bb. The intervals between the notes are: half step, whole step, half step, whole step, half step, whole step, half step, whole step.

We're not done with scales yet, but I would say that these are the fundamental ones. Knowing these can be incredibly helpful in understanding your instrument well, which is important if you want to be an effective improviser.

Remember how I said I was going to be calling you to action throughout this book? Well, we're going to take a pause in our scales studies for your first Practice Challenge!

## PRACTICE CHALLENGE #1

### Easier

- Pick one of the “basic” scales covered above and take it into all 12 keys over the course of one week.
- Practice the scale in 2 keys a day (days 1-6) and use the 7<sup>th</sup> day as a review day to go through all of them.

### Challenging

- Take all “basic scales” covered above into all 12 keys.
- Practice all 6 scales in 2 keys a day (days 1-6) and use the 7<sup>th</sup> day to review all of them.

Just in case you’re wondering, *“How should I know whether to take the Easier option or the Challenging option?”* allow me to speak to that.

If you are already familiar with all of these scales and feel like you just need a refresher on them, try the Challenging option. If you feel like you’re fairly rusty on several of these, take the Easier option. Less is more! Use this kind of logic for these Practice Challenges throughout the book.

Now, you could have just read this Practice Challenge and wondered, **how do I take these scales into all 12 keys?** I think it’s important that I address that before moving on to more scales. Let’s take a slight detour.

# Taking music into all 12 keys

Taking musical examples into all 12 keys is something that I will suggest and ask you to do throughout this book. So it's important that you understand *how you should do it* and *why you should do it*.

**What do I mean by all 12 keys?** I'm talking about the 12 keys in western music as identified by the musical alphabet.

I'll list them chromatically: **A-Bb-B-C-Db-D-Eb-E-F-Gb-G-Ab.**

Personally, I have a hard time doing anything I'm told to do if I don't understand why I am doing it. So let me first explain how practicing music in all 12 keys, as opposed to only the original key, can have a lot of benefits.

## **1. It will improve your technical ability.**

As an improviser, you don't want to be limited in your navigation of your instrument. You want to be free. Therefore, it is important that you feel comfortable playing in any key. Naturally, some will feel stronger than others, but the more comfortable you are with the tougher ones, the better.

## **2. Your ears will improve.**

Taking scales, licks, chord progressions, and jazz standards through all 12 keys is ear training that pays off big. When you start to take familiar jazz language and play it in a key you are not used to, you begin to rely on your ears more than your intellect or muscle memory.

When you become familiar with a particular key, muscle memory sets in and your ears become conditioned to navigate your instrument in that environment. When you start exploring unfamiliar keys, your ears have to catch up. By taking musical information through all 12 keys you are making the unfamiliar familiar, and this will open up your ears in a way you never could have imagined.

### **3. You're going to know that music 12X better.**

Repetition is key, and when you take musical information through all 12 keys you are bound to be repeating it many times.

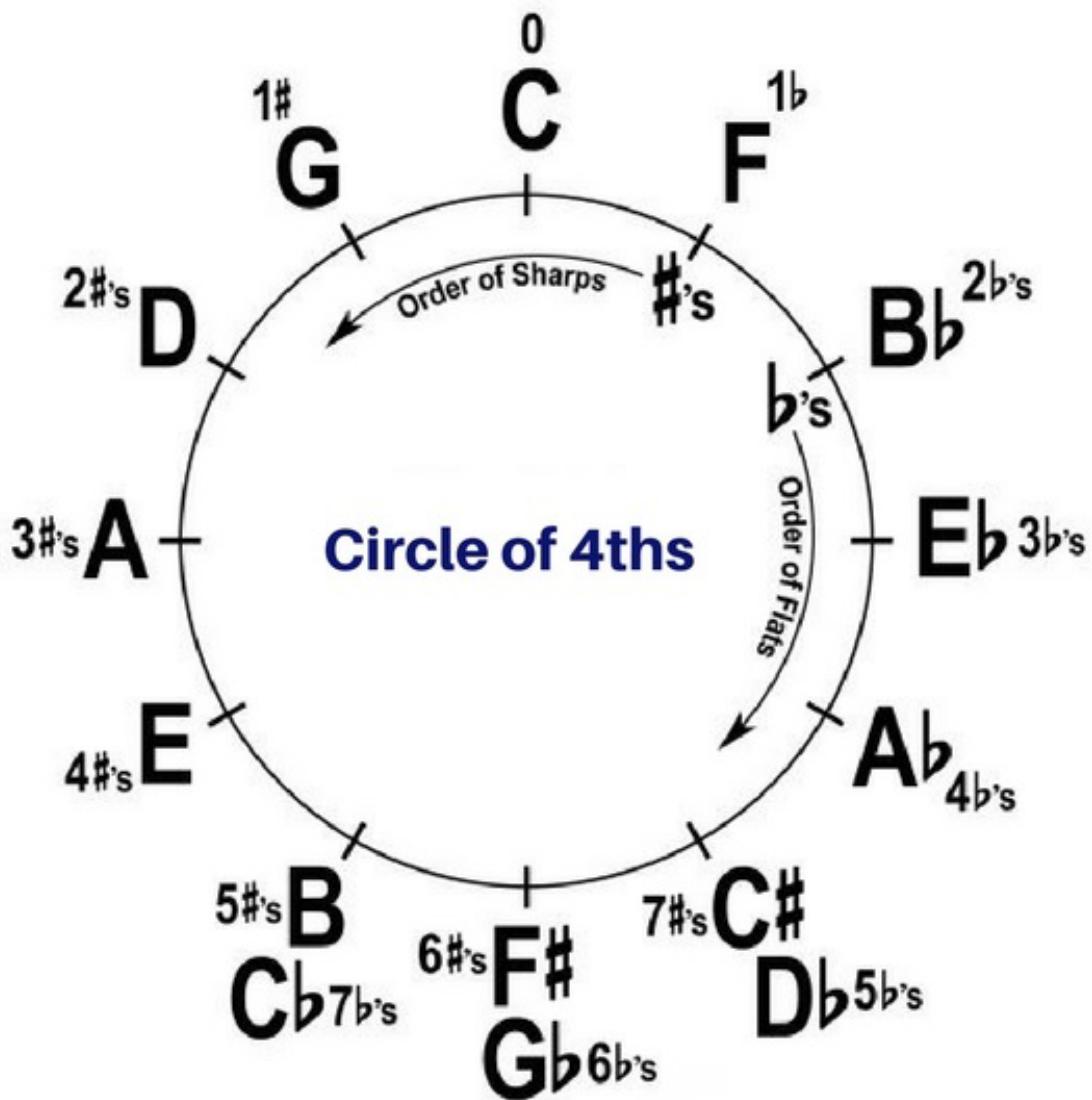
Let's just say you are working on one of these "basic" scales for your Practice Challenge. We can be **conservative** in saying that it will take you **at least 10 times** to truly feel comfortable playing it in one key. Apply that to all 12 keys and do the math: **120 repetitions** at the minimum, and that's only one practice session. The bonus is you're making your ear and your brain think harder when you are doing more than one key, which further ingrains it into your memory. If you ever want to memorize any musical content, this is the way to do it thoroughly!

## **How to practice in all 12 keys**

There is no hard and fast rule on how to practice in all 12 keys. You could go through them chromatically, or you could go through them at random. But allow me to make a suggestion.

Use the **Cycle of 4ths** as a frame of reference. Why? Because a lot of jazz harmony cycles in 4ths. Also because it's an easy way to organize practicing them without doing them in chromatic order.

When I think of cycling in 4ths, I visualize the **Circle of 4ths**:



You may have seen this chart before, or perhaps its inverse, the Circle of 5ths. This chart is useful for memorizing how many flats or sharps are in each key's key signature (which is important), but also a handy visual way to approach practicing in all 12 keys.

So when I practice in all 12 keys, I take the order: **C-F-Bb-Eb-Ab-Db-Gb-B-E-A-D-G**. So for Practice Challenge #1, I would practice a scale in Concert C and F on Day 1, Bb and Eb on Day 2...etc.

Let's get back to scales now that you are in the know of how and why you should take music into all 12 keys.

# The Major Modes

It is important that you understand the modes, how to construct them and how to play them. This will especially come in handy when they are referred to later in this book when we talk about chord/scale relationships.

## What is a mode?

Essentially a mode is a type of scale. ‘Mode’ comes from the Latin for ‘manner or method’ but the names of them are Greek because that’s where they originated from.

Each mode is related to its parent major scale (Ionian). You can think of each mode as starting and finishing on a given tone of the parent scale.

Let’s go through each mode of the major scale. For demonstration purposes, I’m going to notate each mode as it relates to the key of C major. Later I’ll test your knowledge with a little quiz!

## Ionian (Major scale)

Ionian is the 1st mode of the major scale and starts on the first scale degree. The Ionian mode is the parent major scale so just think of it that way.

**Intervallic formula:** W-W-H-W-W-W-H

**Scale tone formula:** 1-2-3-4-5-6-7

**C Ionian:** C-D-E-F-G-A-B



## Dorian

Dorian is the 2<sup>nd</sup> mode of the major scale and starts on the second scale degree. You can also think of this mode as a natural minor scale with a raised 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Intervallic formula:** W-H-W-W-W-H-W

**Scale tone formula:** 1-2-b3-4-5-6-b7

**D Dorian:** D-E-F-G-A-B-C



## Phrygian

Phrygian is the 3<sup>rd</sup> mode of the major scale and starts on the third scale degree. You can think of this mode as a natural minor scale with a flattened 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Intervallic formula:** H-W-W-W-H-W-W

**Scale tone formula:** 1-b2-b3-4-5-b6-b7

**E Phrygian:** E-F-G-A-B-C-D



## Lydian

Lydian is the 4<sup>th</sup> mode of the major scale and starts on the fourth scale degree. You can think of this mode as a major scale with a raised 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Intervallic formula:** W-W-W-H-W-W-H

**Scale tone formula:** 1-2-3-#4-5-6-7

**F Lydian:** F-G-A-B-C-D-E



## Mixolydian

Mixolydian is the 5<sup>th</sup> mode of the major scale and starts on the fifth scale degree. You can think of this mode as a major scale with a flatted 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Intervallic formula:** W-W-H-W-W-H-W

**Scale tone formula:** 1-2-3-4-5-6-b7

**G Mixolydian:** G-A-B-C-D-E-F



## Aeolian

Aeolian is the 6<sup>th</sup> mode of the major scale and starts on the sixth scale degree. The Aeolian mode is the same as the natural minor scale.

**Intervallic formula:** W-H-W-W-H-W-W

**Scale tone formula:** 1-2-b3-4-5-b6-b7

**A Aeolian:** A-B-C-D-E-F-G



## Locrian

Locrian is the 7<sup>th</sup> and last mode of the major scale and starts on the seventh scale degree. The Locrian mode is a bit of a more obscure one. The best way to think of it is a major scale starting and ending on the leading tone (the preceding and last tone of the scale).

**Intervallic formula:** H-W-W-H-W-W-W

**Scale tone formula:** 1-b2-b3-4-b5-b6-b7

**B Locrian:** B-C-D-E-F-G-A



When you understand that the modes are all related to a parent scale, it becomes much easier to memorize. Essentially, you just have to know how to create the parent major scale and then know which scale degree you start on. Of course, depending on your instrument this can be harder or easier to visualize. On the piano, everything is fairly plain to see.

It's not enough to simply understand this, though. As a jazz improviser, you need to be able to summon up these modes in any key that is called upon. Not because you will be using them to create music necessarily, but because they will help you learn to navigate your instrument better.

Here's an example. If you want to play an F Mixolydian scale, you need to ask yourself: ***Of what major scale is F the 5<sup>th</sup> note?***

So knowing your major scales in all 12 keys is crucial. If you happen to be a little bit foggy on how to construct your major scales, refer to the Circle of 4ths chart I showed you. That chart tells you how many flats and sharps are in each key, so if you were to notate your major scales on some staff paper, you could put the appropriate #'s or b's in the key signature and build the scale from there.

**Okay, let's put your mode knowledge to the test!** This is just another example of how I will be calling you to action throughout this book. This short homework assignment will help you solidify this knowledge. Whether the major modes are new or review for you, this will be good to try.

I'm going to list off different modes, ask you to notate them, and write the note letter spelling of each (A-B-C-D...). Don't forget to play them on your instrument! You can put the key signature in of the given key, or just manually put in the accidentals. Feel free to print these pages, or copy this on a piece of notation paper.

Here we go!

## C Mixolydian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

## F# Dorian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

## D Locrian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

## F Aeolian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

## **E Locrian**



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

## **D Ionian**



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

## **A Lydian**



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

## F# Phrygian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

## C# Mixolydian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

## B Aeolian



Parent scale:

Note letter spelling:

**How did you do?**

# Answers

## C Mixolydian

A musical staff in G clef, starting with a C note. It consists of eight notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, and C. The Bb is a half note, while all other notes are quarter notes.

Parent scale: F major

Note letter spelling: C-D-E-F-G-A-Bb

## F# Dorian

A musical staff in G clef, starting with an F# note. It consists of twelve notes: F#, G#, A, B, C#, D#, E, F#, G#, A, B, and C#. The first note is a half note, and the remaining notes are quarter notes.

Parent scale: E major

Note letter spelling: F#-G#-A-B-C#-D#-E

## D Locrian

A musical staff in G clef, starting with a D note. It consists of twelve notes: D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, and Ab. The first note is a half note, and the remaining notes are quarter notes.

Parent scale: Eb major

Note letter spelling: D-Eb-F-G-Ab-Bb-C

## F Aeolian

A musical staff in G clef, four flats (B-flat, D-flat, F-flat, A-flat), and common time. It consists of eight quarter notes: the first note is on the A line, the second on the G line, the third on the F line, the fourth on the E line, the fifth on the D line, the sixth on the C line, the seventh on the B line, and the eighth on the A line.

Parent scale: Ab major

Note letter spelling: F-G-Ab-Bb-C-Db-Eb

## E Locrian

A musical staff in G clef, one flat (B-flat), and common time. It consists of eight quarter notes: the first note is on the A line, the second on the G line, the third on the F line, the fourth on the E line, the fifth on the D line, the sixth on the C line, the seventh on the B line, and the eighth on the A line.

Parent scale: F major

Note letter spelling: E-F-G-A-Bb-C-D

## D Ionian

A musical staff in G clef, one sharp (F-sharp), and common time. It consists of eight quarter notes: the first note is on the A line, the second on the G line, the third on the F line, the fourth on the E line, the fifth on the D line, the sixth on the C line, the seventh on the B line, and the eighth on the A line.

Parent scale: D major

Note letter spelling: D-E-F#-G-A-B-C#

## A Lydian

A musical staff in G major (one sharp) with a common time signature. It consists of ten quarter notes starting from the second line of the staff and moving up through the next six lines.

Parent scale: E major

Note letter spelling: A-B-C#-D#-E-F#-G#

## F# Phrygian

A musical staff in D major (two sharps) with a common time signature. It consists of ten quarter notes starting from the first line of the staff and moving up through the next six lines.

Parent scale: D major

Note letter spelling: F#-G-A-B-C#-D-E

## C# Mixolydian

A musical staff in F# major (three sharps) with a common time signature. It consists of ten quarter notes starting from the second line of the staff and moving up through the next six lines.

Parent scale: F# major

Note letter spelling: C#-D#-E#-F#-G#-A#-B

## B Aeolian



Parent scale: **D major**

Note letter spelling: **B-C#-D-E-F#-G-A**

If you made any mistakes on these, go ahead and take a look back at where you went wrong. Perhaps you based the mode off of the incorrect parent scale. Try to identify how you miscalculated. Perhaps you used the wrong accidentals on certain notes. Go back and make sure that your scale spelling reflects the key signature of the parent scale. Again, if you need help with that, refer to the Circle of 4ths diagram.

If this is new for you, I will encourage you to keep practicing these. Simply write down a list of different modes, notate them, and most importantly, **play them on your instrument**.

Remember, practicing scales and modes aren't a means of making music. They are a means of understanding your instrument better. But if you want to be a great jazz improviser, you will want to know your instrument inside and out. Additionally, you will want to **understand how music works**. That's exactly what working on these scales helps us do. You will see that these are great building blocks as you progress through the book.

Now let's go over a simple exercise to help you practice all of the modes of the major scale together. In this exercise, you will be starting on Ionian, playing the scale up one octave for two bars, going up to the next note and coming down Dorian, back up Phrygian, down Lydian, and so on and so forth. If this doesn't make sense right away, the exercise will be fairly self-explanatory. **Remember: you can click on the exercise to listen to it.**

## Exercise 1

The image shows a series of eight staves of music, each consisting of five horizontal lines. The first seven staves are labeled with mode names above them: Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian. The eighth staff is labeled "Ionian (2 octaves)" above it. The music is written in common time (indicated by a '4' in a circle) and uses quarter notes. The notes are distributed across the staves in a repeating pattern that covers two octaves.

Not too tricky right? Nevertheless, this is an excellent way to combine the modes together and gets you moving on your instrument. Make sure you feel comfortable playing this exercise.

**Here are some ways you can take this exercise further:**

- » Practice it in other keys. All 12 is always great, but several others will do!
- » If the range of your instrument permits, play each mode for two octaves rather than one. That would have you playing the Ionian three octaves on the way back down.

Let's expand this exercise by adding a pattern to it. We will be applying more patterns to scales in upcoming pages, but this is a little sneak peak. The pattern used is a **3rds pattern**. Essentially, you are playing a major scale but separating each scale degree by a corresponding major or minor third related to the scale. This pattern has you starting on the tonic of the scale jumping up a major third, and coming back down to the second scale degree, then up a minor third and back down to the third scale degree, and so on. This will make more sense when you play it.

Depending on what instrument you play this could really push your range. Great! This is a fantastic warm up exercise. But feel free to adjust octaves if you feel it is necessary. No harm in that!

## Exercise 2

The sheet music consists of seven staves of eighth-note patterns, each labeled with a mode name above it. The modes are: Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian. The final staff is labeled "Ionian (2 octaves)". All patterns are in common time (indicated by a '1' over a '4') and use a treble clef. The patterns follow a specific 3rds pattern: starting on the tonic, moving up a major third to the third note, then down a minor third to the second note, and back up to the third note, and so on through the scale degrees.

# Modes of the Melodic Minor you should know

I don't feel it necessary for our purposes to know all of the modes of the melodic minor. However, there are some fairly common ones that are particularly useful when talking about chord scale theory. Therefore I think it's appropriate that we cover them now.

As is the case with the major modes, each one of these is based on a parent scale, only this time the parent scale is melodic minor. Make sure you have these in your arsenal and ready to go. I will mention what chords these are appropriate to associate with, but I will go into further detail on that later in the book.

For the sake of simplicity and since we aren't covering all of the modes of the melodic minor, I will notate these in C (concert C, Bb, and Eb depending on your instrument).

## Lydian Dominant

Lydian Dominant is the 4<sup>th</sup> mode of the melodic minor and starts on the fourth degree of the scale. This chord is often used over a #11 chord (ex. C7#11).

**Intervallic formula:** W-W-W-H-W-H-W

**Scale tone formula:** 1-2-3-#4-5-6-b7

**C Lydian Dominant:** C-D-E-F#-G-A-Bb



## Altered Scale

The Altered Scale is the 7<sup>th</sup> mode of the melodic minor and starts on the seventh degree of the scale. This scale is related most commonly to dominant 7 altered chords, altered meaning the 4 possible types of alterations over a dominant 7 chord: *b9-#9-#11-b13*.

**Intervallic formula:** H-W-H-W-W-W-W

**Scale tone formula:** 1-b2-b3-3-#4-b6-b7

**C Altered Scale:** C-Db-Eb-E-F#-Ab-Bb



## Scales Not Mentioned and Why

At this point I have covered all of the scales I think are important to focus on. If you're a scale junky, you're probably crying out, *"but there are so many more!"* And you would be right.

But I'm not a scales guy. As I hope I've driven home by now, **scales are a means of learning your instrument, and not to make music.** So forgive me if there are some missing.

I will cover the major and minor pentatonic a little bit later, which I think are relevant scales that can be made musical. So I'll present it in a more applicable context.

I have purposefully left out a scale that I think is overused and not helpful. **The Blues Scale.** Why you may ask? In short, the blues scale is an attempt at conceptualizing blues language by adding a b5 chromatic passing tone to a minor pentatonic scale. As a result, this scale becomes a crutch for a lot of beginner jazz improvisers. I think there are better ways to go about identifying jazz and blues language. This is just my opinion, but trust me, you aren't missing out on anything!

# Applying Patterns to Scales

When learning scales, I believe it is important to practice them in such a way that helps improve technique on your instrument. It's great to be able to play a scale because you know it, but it's even better if you can utilize it to help you move on your instrument.

This is a big part of what we want to accomplish when learning scales as jazz improvisers: **having the freedom to do anything we want on our instrument.**

So let's go over some patterns you can practice over any type of scale. These are relatively easy to apply and will give you a good workout!

## Exercise 3

### 1231 Pattern

This pattern walks up three scale degrees and goes back to the tonic. Then it moves up to the second scale degree, walks up three from it and back down to the second degree, and so on and so forth.



## Exercise 4

### 1321 Pattern

This pattern jumps up to the major 3<sup>rd</sup> and walks back down to the tonic. Then the second scale degree jumps up to the minor 3<sup>rd</sup> and walks back down to the second degree, and so on.

## Exercise 5

### 1235 Pattern

This pattern walks up the scale for 3 scale degrees and then skips the 4 landing on the 5. Then it walks up three scale degrees starting on the second, skips the 5 and lands on the 6. This is a pattern that can be heard at the beginning of John Coltrane's solo on Giant Steps.

## Exercise 6

### Ascending Triplets Pattern

This pattern moves up the scale in triplets, essentially 1-2-3-2-3-4-3-4-5...

When the scale descends, the triplet movement still ascends.



## Exercise 7

### Triads Pattern #1

This one gets a little bit trickier! For every scale tone you can create a triad. Don't know what a triad is? Don't worry, we will go over all of that in the next chapter of the book. Don't know how to build a triad off of a scale tone? Again, don't worry. **But here's the crash course:** take any of the scale degrees and build a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> on top of it, making sure that each note is diatonic to the scale.



## Exercise 8

### Triads Pattern #2

Here's another pattern using the triads associated to the major scale. Consider this a sneak preview of the next chapter! This time the triads start on the 5<sup>th</sup> of each triad and move down towards their respective scale degree.



### PRACTICE CHALLENGE #2

#### Easier

- Try taking any one of the “basic” scales or modes and apply the 6 patterns we just covered over the course of a week.
- Practice one pattern a day. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day review all of the patterns.

#### Challenging

- Pick a scale and apply the patterns while going through all 12 keys.
- Practice one pattern a day, 2 keys per day cycling in 4ths. Review on the 7<sup>th</sup> day.

The great thing about Practice Challenge #2 is that it can be repeated using other scales. Indeed the patterns do feel different and present challenges specific to particular scales. I would suggest making these kinds of practices part of your warm-up routine.

## **Okay, let's review what we know about scales:**

Scales are necessary for learning and understanding your instrument.

- » Scales are good to work on to improve your technique.
- » Scales are not musical in and of themselves, and should not be used as a primary approach for jazz improvisation.
- » Modes are scales related to a parent key center.
- » Practicing scales in all 12 keys helps to make sure you can navigate all keys equally.
- » You can apply different patterns to scales to help you improve technique, flexibility, and better comprehension.
- » Scales can be a useful foundation to work from when understanding how jazz harmony works.

Before we go on to talk about chords, let's take a quick detour and talk about something important...

# A Quick Lesson on Swing Feel

In the upcoming exercises most of the audio recordings demonstrate eighth notes with a **swing feel**.

Swing is a fairly common part of jazz language, and so I think this is important to cover. It's necessary that you understand what the implied rhythm of swung eighth notes are.

**Straight eighth rhythm:**



In a straight eighth rhythm, all notes are played evenly. You can count it 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &.

**Swung eighth rhythm:**

There are a few ways to perceive a swung eighth note rhythm, but in general, an underlying triplet feel is present. Here's a legato (smooth flowing with no breaks between notes) way to think of a swung eighth.



A more staccato (meaning abrupt/short) way to phrase the swung eighths would be like this:



In general, you will want to stick to a more legato phrasing of swung eighths. Here's one last way to think of it without the use of triplets:



Keep in mind that unless the music specifically calls for a straight eight or Latin groove, jazz musicians will swing eighth notes by default. In other words, if you see plain eighth notes, swing them unless otherwise directed.

You want to be sure to find the right balance in your swing. Over exaggerating the swing is generally not encouraged. You want to find a middle ground between swung eighths and straight.

# C H A P T E R

# 2

## Chords from the Ground Up

### Triads

In my opinion, too many jazz students overlook triads and move straight to 7<sup>th</sup> chords. But triads are so important. They are **the foundation of any chord**. Every other chord builds on top of a triad.

Perhaps you already understand triads, and that's fine, this will be review for you. If triads are something you feel you could use some more knowledge on, this will be good for you. Either way, I will be calling you to action!

The goal is to not only define triads and understand how they are constructed, but to start to use them in a way that will aid our jazz improvisation.

Remember how I said scales aren't the best tools for improvising? Well, triads are a different story. Triads can be used in a musical way and I would highly suggest using them to outline chord changes and as tools for creating melodies.

Throughout this chapter, we will be doing exercises that connect different triads together. It's important that you apply them and see how they can work together. So what exactly is a triad?

#### What's a triad?

A triad is what I call the foundation of any chord. A more textbook definition would be: a set of three notes that can be stacked in thirds.

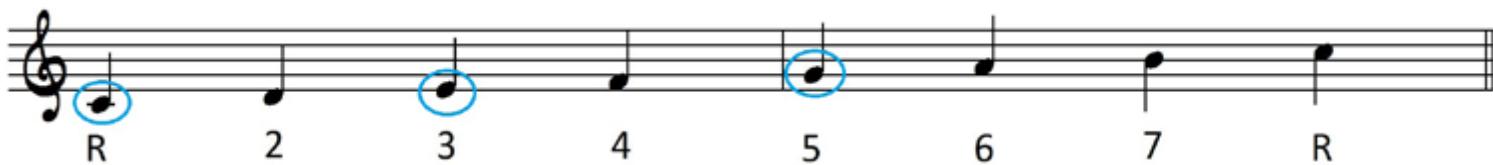
**Basic formula:** Root-3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> (*3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> altered depending on quality*)

There are four kinds of triads you need to know: **Major**, **Minor**, **Augmented**, and **Diminished**. Once you know these four, you have the necessary tools to start building every other kind of chord. First, let's go over major triads.

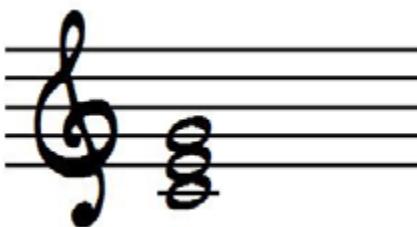
## Major Triads

**Formula for a major triad:** Root-3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>

Take a look at the C major scale so you can see where we grab these chord tones from.



When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other, you get a C major triad: C-E-G.



Nothing too complicated here! If this is foreign to you, be sure to spell out this triad on your instrument. If you play a chordal instrument, such as the piano or guitar, play this triad as a chord.

**This next part is critically important to understand:** A chord can be structured using any of the chord tones as a bass note. The C major triad notated above is in what we call **Root Position**. Root Position meaning, the root (C) is in the bass. But when we build the chord with a non-root chord tone in the bass, we get what we call an **inversion**.

# Inversions and How They Work

Because triads consist of only three notes (*tri*), there is only a root position and two possible inversions: **1<sup>st</sup> Inversion** and **2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion**.

First I'll tell you how inversions work, and then I'll tell you why they are important as jazz improvisers.

**1<sup>st</sup> Inversion means the 3<sup>rd</sup> will be the bass note.** What's the next note up from the root? The 3<sup>rd</sup>. So now the triad will be structured **3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-Root**. Essentially, we just shifted the notes into a different order.



So now the C triad is spelled: E-G-C. The root moved to the top note. Same notes, same triad, different order.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion means the 5<sup>th</sup> will be the bass note.** The next note up from the 3<sup>rd</sup> is the 5<sup>th</sup>. So now the triad will be structured **5<sup>th</sup>-Root-3<sup>rd</sup>**.



Again, not too difficult of a concept to understand. Here's Root Position, 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion and 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion notated next to each other to help you visualize this further.

The image shows a single-line musical staff. Above the staff, three labels are centered: "Root Position", "1st Inversion", and "2nd Inversion". Below each label is a chord symbol: a C-shape for Root Position, a G-shape for 1st Inversion, and a B-shape for 2nd Inversion. The staff itself has four horizontal lines and three spaces. The C-shape is positioned on the second line, the G-shape on the third space, and the B-shape on the fourth line.

## Why are inversions important?

As jazz improvisers, we need to be able to transition from chord to chord effortlessly. Of course, if you are an accompanist, the benefits of inversions are obvious. But using triad inversions in your single note lines is equally beneficial. It's often not practical or musical to use a triad (or any chord) starting on the root note. If the melodic line you are playing lands on the next chord, you want to know where the nearest chord tone is and how to outline it. This could mean you fall on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the next chord. You want to know what the other chord tones are in relation to that note.

Now, of course when you improvise you don't want to be thinking about this stuff. **Music is a language.** When I speak in English (my native language) I'm not thinking about how I am communicating. It's natural for me. I'm just doing it. But when I practice Greek (My wife's native language) I have to think about it. I have to break it apart and figure out. If I say in Greek to someone "*I am going to the store,*" and they ask back "*What will you get there?*" I'd have to think about my response. It wouldn't be automatic (at least not yet). I need to practice in order for it to become natural.

So the same as I need to practice saying basic things and simple sentences, you have to do the same with music. Because at the end of the day, jazz improvisers need to be ready to respond to anything that could musically happen. You have to know the language and part of that is knowing the fundamentals.

So throughout our studies of triads and 7<sup>th</sup> chords, we will be doing exercises that are designed to help you practice these chord qualities with chord transitions.

This first one switches between a **C major triad** and an **F major triad**. You can think of this as a I-IV chord progression. The idea is to ascend one triad and descend the next starting from the nearest chord tone. Essentially you will be playing the arpeggios of these triads and their inversions.

## Exercise 9

Musical score for Exercise 9 in 6/8 time. The top staff shows chords C, F, C, F, C, F, C, F. The bottom staff shows bass notes F, C, F, C, F, C, F, C.

Notice that starting in bar 5 the pattern switches so that the F triad is ascending and the C triad is descending. Each chord is played for three beats in 6/8 time.

A big part of this is understanding whether you are playing Root Position, 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion, or 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion of the given triads. It's important that you can identify them. Allow me to do the first one of these for you.

Musical score for Exercise 9 with triad inversions labeled. Blue circles highlight the roots of each triad. The top staff shows R, 2nd, 1st, R, 2nd, 1st, R, 2nd. The bottom staff shows F, C, F, C, F, C, F, C.

I've labeled each triad as either R (Root Position), 1<sup>st</sup> (1<sup>st</sup> Inversion), or 2<sup>nd</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion). And how do I identify the triads? **By the root.**

If the root is in the bass (C or F) it is in Root Position.

If the 3<sup>rd</sup> is in the bass (E or A) it is in 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion.

If the 5<sup>th</sup> is in the bass (G or C) it is in 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion.

Let's try one more. This can be thought of as a I-V progression.

### Exercise 10

The musical notation is in 6/8 time. The top staff starts with a C chord (three eighth notes) followed by a G chord (two eighth notes, then a sixteenth note). The bottom staff starts with a G chord (two eighth notes, then a sixteenth note) followed by a C chord (three eighth notes). The notation uses sixteenth-note patterns throughout.

Can you identify the Root Position voicings and inversions? Go through and do it now, even if you're tempted to just play through it and leave it at that. If you take the time to identify these things it can help you in the long run.

### → PRACTICE CHALLENGE #3

#### Easier

- Come up with at least 3 more chord combinations and apply them to the style of the previously covered exercises. They can be random and don't need to be diatonic.

#### Challenging

- Take those 3 and practice them in all 12 keys. This is a hefty task, but you can be sure that this will put you to practice!

As we continue doing these exercises throughout the different triad and 7<sup>th</sup> chord qualities, you will begin to see how helpful this kind of practicing can be. It may seem tedious at times, but I guarantee you will feel more confident in navigating your instrument than you ever have before!

Let's move on to the next triad quality: **minor**.

# Minor Triads

Formula for a minor triad: Root-b3-5<sup>th</sup>

So the only difference between a minor triad and a major triad is the flattened third. Take a look at the chord tones drawn from the natural minor scale.



When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a C minor triad: C-Eb-G.



And here is the minor triad notated in Root Position, 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion and 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion.

Root Position	1st Inversion	2nd Inversion

Now let's try another one of these exercises! The idea is to make sure you have a handle on the minor triad and its inversions, as well as how to connect them with other minor triad keys. This one goes from a **C minor** triad to a **D minor triad**, just a whole step apart. I'll put the key signature in C minor for demonstration purposes.

## Exercise 11

Musical notation for Exercise 11. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The progression consists of alternating chords: C minor, D minor, C minor, D minor, C minor, D minor, C minor, D minor, D minor, C minor, D minor, C minor, D minor, C minor. The chords are indicated by labels above the staff.

You'll notice that this one is pretty straight-forward as far as inversions go. Because they are only a whole step away from each other, the Root Position C minor is followed by a Root Position D minor and so on and so forth. Nevertheless, I think it can be helpful to see the movement so clearly.

Now let's try another exercise of this sort, except for this time we will be combining **major and minor** triads together. In this case we will use the same progression as Exercise 10, but we will make the F, minor. So the progression will be a I-minor iv progression in the key of C (C-Fmin).

## Exercise 12

Musical notation for Exercise 12. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The progression consists of alternating chords: C, F minor, C, F minor, C, F minor, C, F minor, F minor, C, F minor, C, F minor, C. The chords are indicated by labels above the staff.

I find it to be great practice taking short chord progressions and doing exercises like this one, changing the qualities of chords as you go. The more different combinations you can come up with the better!

## → PRACTICE CHALLENGE #4

Easier

- Come up with at least 3 more chord combinations that combine major and minor triads like in Exercise 12.

Challenging

- Take those 3 and practice them in all 12 keys.

The Practice Challenges for our chord studies may seem repetitive as we continue. But remember, I'm calling you to action. I want you to practice, and do something about the information I'm giving you. You got this! I'm rooting for you.

# Augmented Triads

Formula for an augmented triad: Root-3<sup>rd</sup>-#5

I always think of the augmented triad as being related to the major triad, just with a #5. To demonstrate where we grab these chord tones from, I've notated a **Lydian Augmented scale**, also called a Lydian #5 scale.

A musical staff in G major (one sharp) with a common time signature (4/4). The notes are: G (R), A (2), B (3), C# (#4), D# (blue circle), E (6), F# (7), G (R). The 3rd, 4th, and 5th degrees are circled in blue.

When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a C augmented triad: C-E-G#.

Stacked notes on a single staff: C, E, G#.

And here is the augmented triad notated in Root Position, 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion and 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion.

Root Position	1st Inversion	2nd Inversion
 G major root position chord: G-B-D.	 G major 1st inversion chord: B-D-G.	 G major 2nd inversion chord: D-G-B.

Now, this triad moves symmetrically. If you move up every chord tone up a major third, the notes automatically rotate to the next inversion. If you play a visual instrument like the piano or guitar you will have especially noticed this. Don't take my word for it, though! Take a look at each inversion and notice that each note move up in major 3rds.

Let's do our exercise now and have the augmented triad move up and down in whole steps. So we will be using a C+ to a D+ (+ is the symbol for augmented).

### Exercise 13

The musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff is in common time (indicated by a 'C') and the bottom staff is in 6/8 time (indicated by a '6/8'). Both staves begin with a treble clef. The top staff starts with a C+ chord (E-G#-B) and moves to a D+ chord (F#-A#-C#). The bottom staff starts with a D+ chord (G#-B#-D#) and moves to a C+ chord (E-G#-B). The notation uses eighth-note patterns and rests to indicate the chord changes.

No too tricky right? I find augmented triads to be on the easier side when doing exercises like these.

But now let's combine these augmented triads with major and minor triads. This is where things start to get interesting in my opinion. For this chord progression we are going to do a **ii-V-I-VI**, which is a popular chord progression in jazz that we will be studying later in this book. So now instead of two chords we are doing four. In the key of C, our chord progression will be **Dmin-G+-C-A+**.

## Exercise 14

The musical score consists of two staves of music. The top staff is in 6/8 time and the bottom staff is in 8/8 time. Both staves begin with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure of each staff shows a sixteenth-note pattern starting on D. The second measure shows a sixteenth-note pattern starting on G+. The third measure shows a sixteenth-note pattern starting on C. The fourth measure shows a sixteenth-note pattern starting on A+. The fifth measure shows a sixteenth-note pattern starting on D MIN. The sixth measure shows a sixteenth-note pattern starting on G+. The seventh measure shows a sixteenth-note pattern starting on C. The eighth measure shows a sixteenth-note pattern starting on A+.

You may have noticed that this exercise is slightly different from the others. This time we stuck with the order of the chord progression going descending, rather than repeating the last chord in bar 4 and working backward. This just makes more practical sense for our purposes.

### PRACTICE CHALLENGE #5

#### Easier

- Practice Exercise 14 in 6 different keys. One per day of the week, on the seventh day review.

#### Challenging

- Practice Exercise 14 in all 12 keys. Two keys per six days, review all 12 on the seventh day.

# Diminished Triads

Formula for a diminished triad: Root-b3-b5

In the same way that I think of the augmented triad being related to the major triad, the diminished triad I think of being related to the minor triad. The only difference between the minor and diminished is the b5.



When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a C diminished triad: C-Eb-Gb.



And here is the diminished triad notated in Root Position, 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion and 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion.

Three musical staves in G clef showing the C diminished triad in Root Position, 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion.

Root Position	1st Inversion	2nd Inversion
C-Eb-Gb	Eb-Gb-C	Gb-C-Eb

Let's do as we have done before and practice an exercise that runs through two different diminished triads. The more you do stuff like this, the more proficient you will be!

## Exercise 15

Musical notation for Exercise 15 consists of two staves. The top staff is in 6/8 time and the bottom staff is in 8/8 time. Both staves feature sixteenth-note patterns. Above the top staff, the chords C<sub>DIM</sub>, D<sub>DIM</sub>, C<sub>DIM</sub>, D<sub>DIM</sub>, C<sub>DIM</sub>, D<sub>DIM</sub>, C<sub>DIM</sub>, and D<sub>DIM</sub> are labeled. Above the bottom staff, the chords D<sub>DIM</sub>, C<sub>DIM</sub>, D<sub>DIM</sub>, C<sub>DIM</sub>, D<sub>DIM</sub>, C<sub>DIM</sub>, D<sub>DIM</sub>, and C<sub>DIM</sub> are labeled.

Now let's combine all of the triad quality types together. This will be a I-#idim-ii-V progression: **C-C#dim-Dmin-G+**.

## Exercise 16

Musical notation for Exercise 16 consists of two staves. The top staff is in 6/8 time and the bottom staff is in 8/8 time. Both staves feature sixteenth-note patterns. Above the top staff, the chords C, C<sup>#</sup><sub>DIM</sub>, D<sub>MIN</sub>, G<sup>+</sup>, C, C<sup>#</sup><sub>DIM</sub>, D<sub>MIN</sub>, and G<sup>+</sup> are labeled. Above the bottom staff, the chords C, C<sup>#</sup><sub>DIM</sub>, D<sub>MIN</sub>, G<sup>+</sup>, C, C<sup>#</sup><sub>DIM</sub>, D<sub>MIN</sub>, and G<sup>+</sup> are labeled.

## → PRACTICE CHALLENGE #6

Easier

- Review each triad quality type (4) over the course of 4 days. Create your own exercises or use the ones provided in this chapter.

Challenging

- Review each triad quality type over the course of 4 days, by taking exercises 9-16 into at least three different keys from the original.

Let me repeat what I said at the beginning of this triads section: **triads are the foundation of any chord**. So it's incredibly important that you understand how to create the four different qualities, how to play them, and how to combine them together.

The idea is the more you practice these, not only will they become easier, you will learn to navigate your instrument better. This will give you a leg up when it comes to jazz improvisation.

Let's move on to **7<sup>th</sup> chords!**

## 7<sup>th</sup> Chords

One of the characteristics of jazz standards are the lush, colorful chords that populate their harmonies. Jazz musicians often use chords that offer more harmonic information than simple triads. These basic types of chords are called **7<sup>th</sup> chords**.

### What's a 7<sup>th</sup> chord?

A 7<sup>th</sup> chord is a triad with the 7<sup>th</sup> tone of its corresponding scale stacked on top.

**Basic formula:** Root-3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, or 7<sup>th</sup> altered depending on quality)

In the same way that triads can be used in musical ways, so can 7<sup>th</sup> chords. In fact, later in the book you'll discover how the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> tones of any chord are incredibly important for hearing chord changes in your solos.

So knowing your 7<sup>th</sup> chords and how to connect them together is important. We will be applying similar exercises that we used with triads to 7<sup>th</sup> chords as well.

There are 5 qualities of 7<sup>th</sup> chords: **major 7**, **dominant7**, **minor 7**, **half-diminished**, and **diminished 7**. Let's start with the major 7<sup>th</sup>.

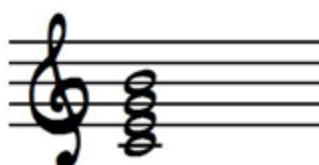
## Major 7 Chords

**Formula for a major 7 chord:** Root-3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>

Same as a major triad but with the 7<sup>th</sup> scale degree stacked on top. Pretty simple right? If you know your major scale it's simple to pick out where all of the chord tones come from.



When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a Cmaj7: C-E-G-B.



Of course, there are also inversions to all of the major 7 chord qualities. Because there are four chord tones, we end up having three inversions. Here is the Cmaj7 notated in Root Position, 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion and 3<sup>rd</sup> Inversion.

Root Position	1st Inversion	2nd Inversion	3rd Inversion

Just to be extra clear, the **3<sup>rd</sup> Inversion has the 7<sup>th</sup> in the bass**. If you see the 7<sup>th</sup> in the bass of a chord or arpeggio, it is in 3<sup>rd</sup> Inversion.

So let's run an arpeggio exercise like we have done with our triads. This one is a I-IV chord progression in C major: **Cmaj7-Fmaj7**.

### Exercise 17

The musical notation consists of two staves. The top staff starts with a Cmaj7 chord, followed by an Fmaj7 chord. The bottom staff starts with an Fmaj7 chord, followed by a Cmaj7 chord. Both staves are in common time (indicated by a '4' in a circle) and show eighth-note patterns. The first measure of each staff shows a descending eighth-note pattern (C-B-A-G). The second measure shows an ascending eighth-note pattern (F-E-D-C).

If you've been following along since the triad studies, this will be familiar territory by now. You'll notice how these two chords connect quite gracefully. Give this exercise a good practice and make sure you can play it comfortably on your instrument.

We won't do quite as many exercises in this 7<sup>th</sup> chord chapter, because any of the triad exercises can be applied to these 7<sup>th</sup> chords. You can look at **Practice Challenges 3-6** in the triads chapter and apply them to each 7<sup>th</sup> chord quality. For the sake of not being redundant, I'm asking you to go back to those practice challenges at the end of each chord quality.

Let's move on to the next 7<sup>th</sup> chord quality: **dominant 7**.

# Dominant 7 Chords

Formula for a dominant 7 chord: Root-3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-b7

Same as a major 7 chord but with a b7. Dominant 7 chords play a huge role in jazz and the blues so these are important chords to have down solid! This chord comes straight out of the Mixolydian scale.



When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a C7: C-E-G-Bb.



Here is the C7 notated in Root Position, 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion and 3<sup>rd</sup> Inversion.

Root Position	1st Inversion	2nd Inversion	3rd Inversion

As I said, I'm not going to give you as many exercises for our 7<sup>th</sup> chords studies. But I do encourage you to apply your dominant 7 chords to practices like Exercise 17. Take any variety of different dominant 7 chords and string them together. The more you practice this, the more familiar you will be with navigating dominant 7 chords on your instrument.

Instead, let's jump ahead to combining major 7 and dominant 7 chords together. This is a simple I-V-I progression. Dominant 7 chords are often used as **tension chords**, meaning they demand a resolution. Starting in bar 5, it descends as a V-I progression.

## Exercise 18

The musical score consists of two staves of eight measures each. The top staff starts with a C major 7th chord (CMAJ<sup>7</sup>) followed by a G7 chord. This pattern repeats four times. The bottom staff starts with a G7 chord followed by a C major 7th chord (CMAJ<sup>7</sup>). This pattern also repeats four times. Both staves use a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature.

Remember to refer to some of the Practice Challenges from the triads chapter so you can put these to further practice!

Let's move on to our next 7<sup>th</sup> chord quality type: **minor 7**.

## Minor 7 Chords

Formula for a minor 7 chord: Root-b3-5<sup>th</sup>-b7

Like the minor triad, the 3<sup>rd</sup> is flattened. And like the dominant 7 chord, the 7<sup>th</sup> is flattened. Take a look at the natural minor scale, which is where you can draw these chord tones from.

A musical scale diagram in G major (natural minor) with a treble clef. The notes are labeled R, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, b7, R. The notes b3, 5, and b7 are circled in blue to indicate they are the notes used to form a minor 7 chord.

When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other, you get a Cmin7: C-Eb-G-Bb.

A diagram showing the stacked notes of a C minor 7 chord (Cmin7) on a treble clef staff. The notes are C, Eb, G, and Bb, stacked vertically from bottom to top.

Here is the Cmin7 notated in Root Position, 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion and 3<sup>rd</sup> Inversion.

Root Position

1<sup>st</sup> Inversion

2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion

3<sup>rd</sup> Inversion

The image shows four staves of musical notation. Each staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The first staff (Root Position) shows a bass note (C), a middle C note, and an E note. The second staff (1<sup>st</sup> Inversion) shows a bass note (C), a G note, and an E note. The third staff (2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion) shows a bass note (C), a G note, and a B note. The fourth staff (3<sup>rd</sup> Inversion) shows a bass note (C), a B note, and an E note.

In Exercise 14 during the triads section, we studied a ii-V-I-VI chord progression using only triads. In this next exercise we are going to use the same chord progression but of course with 7<sup>th</sup> chords. The V chord will become a dominant 7 chord and the VI chord will become a minor 7 chord (vi).

In the next chapter we are going to study diatonic chord progressions and how to build them, so if the chord progressions we are using in these exercises don't make sense to you right now, don't worry! We will be covering that soon. This progression goes **Dmin7-G7-Cmaj7-Amin7**.

### Exercise 19

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff starts with a Dmin7 chord, followed by a G7 chord, a Cmaj7 chord, and an Amin7 chord. The bottom staff continues the progression with another Dmin7 chord, followed by a G7 chord, a Cmaj7 chord, and an Amin7 chord. Both staves use eighth-note patterns to fill the measures.

We only have two more 7<sup>th</sup> chord qualities left. So make sure you have these chords well practiced by revisiting some of the Practice Challenges in the triads section.

Let's go on to the next 7<sup>th</sup> chord quality: **half-diminished**.

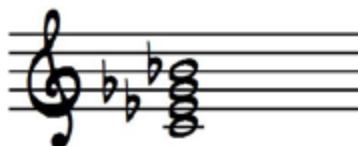
# Half-Diminished Chords

Formula for a Half-Diminished chord: Root-b3-b5-b7

Take a minor 7 chord and flat the 5, and you have what we call a half-diminished chord. This chord is also commonly known as a **minor 7(b5) chord**. We can draw these chord tones from the Locrian scale.



When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a Cmin7(b5): C-Eb-Gb-Bb.



Here is the Cmin7(b5) notated in Root Position, 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion and 3<sup>rd</sup> Inversion.

Root Position	1st Inversion	2nd Inversion	3rd Inversion

As I've already mentioned before, try replicating some of our previous exercises in the triads section and Exercise 17 on major 7<sup>th</sup> chords and combine two half-diminished chords together. This is a great practice, especially because it's not often that you would see two half-diminished chords used consecutively.

For this exercise, let's turn Exercise 19 into what we call a **minor ii-V-i-vi**. Essentially we are turning the ii chord and the vi chord into half-diminished chords and the i chord into a minor 7 chord. Again, if you don't understand how chord progressions work, don't worry. We will be covering chord progressions in an upcoming chapter!

## Exercise 20

The musical score consists of two staves of eighth-note patterns. The top staff starts with **D MIN<sup>7(b5)</sup>**, followed by **G<sup>7</sup>**, **C MIN<sup>7</sup>**, **A MIN<sup>7(b5)</sup>**, **D MIN<sup>7(b5)</sup>**, **G<sup>7</sup>**, **C MIN<sup>7</sup>**, and **A MIN<sup>7(b5)</sup>**. The bottom staff follows the same sequence of chords. Both staves are in 4/4 time and C major (indicated by a C with a circle). The notes are eighth notes, and the patterns are primarily eighth-note runs.

I think it's a great practice to make small adjustments and alterations to existing exercises! For me, it's interesting to play Exercise 19 and 20 one after each other and observe what notes change the quality of the chord.

Now for one last 7<sup>th</sup> chord to cover: **diminished 7**.

# Diminished 7 Chords

Formula for a Diminished 7 chord: Root-b3-b5-bb7

That's right! If you take a half-diminished chord and flat the 7<sup>th</sup> chord tone twice, you get a fully diminished 7 chord. I suppose it makes the meaning of half-diminished all that more clear. We can draw these chord tones straight out of the Whole-Half Diminished scale.

A musical staff in G clef showing the Whole-Half Diminished scale. The notes are: R (Root), 2, b3 (flat 3rd), 4, #4 (sharp 4th), #5, 6 (bb7, double flat 7th), and 7. The notes b3, #4, and 6 are circled in blue.

Mind you, when we spell out the chord, we call it a bb7 not a 6, so in the key of C, it would be a Bbb. When you stack these scale degrees on top of each other you get a Cdim7: C-Eb-Gb-Bbb.

A musical staff in G clef showing the Cdim7 chord in root position. It consists of the notes C (Root), Eb (flat 3rd), Gb (double flat 5th), and Bbb (double flat 7th).

Here is the Cdim7 notated in Root Position, 1<sup>st</sup> Inversion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Inversion and 3<sup>rd</sup> Inversion.

Root Position	1st Inversion	2nd Inversion	3rd Inversion

This is our last exercise for our chord studies! Make it count. This time, of course, we are mixing the diminished 7 chord in with other 7<sup>th</sup> chords. This chord progression is a I-#idim-ii-V, similar to Exercise 16 in our triads chapter, but with 7<sup>th</sup> chords.

## Exercise 21

C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>    C<sub>#DIM</sub><sup>7</sup>    D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>    G<sup>7</sup>    C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>    C<sub>#DIM</sub><sup>7</sup>    D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>    G<sup>7</sup>

C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>    C<sub>#DIM</sub><sup>7</sup>    D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>    G<sup>7</sup>    C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>    C<sub>#DIM</sub><sup>7</sup>    D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>    G<sup>7</sup>

### PRACTICE CHALLENGE #7

Easier

- Review each 7<sup>th</sup> chord quality type (5) over the course of 5 days. Create your own exercises or use the ones provided in this chapter.

Challenging

- Review each 7<sup>th</sup> chord quality type over the course of 5 days, by taking Exercises 17-21 into at least three different keys from the original.

# 7<sup>th</sup> Chord Extensions and Alterations

It's important that you understand that many of these 7<sup>th</sup> chords we just studied can be extended and altered. This is not only important to comprehend if you play a chordal instrument, like a piano or guitar, but it's also important to know as an improviser.

Why you may ask? Throughout your jazz studies, you will most surely come across chords labeled, for example, as a *C7(#11)* or *Bbmin11*. You'll want to know how to construct these chords and how they may influence your note choices as an improviser. First things first, let's go over some definitions to get off on the right foot!

## What's a chord extension?

Chord extensions are essentially chord tones that are added above the basic 7<sup>th</sup> chord structure (R-3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>). The possible extensions are the **9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup>**. These extensions don't replace the R-3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> but are added in addition to achieve a desired sound. However, in some cases, an extended chord may exclude a basic chord tone to avoid dissonance.

The easiest way to understand chord extensions is to think of them as the notes in between the basic structural chord tones: the **2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup>**.

**The 9<sup>th</sup> is the same as the 2<sup>nd</sup>, just up an octave.**

**The 11<sup>th</sup> is the same as the 4<sup>th</sup>, up an octave.**

**The 13<sup>th</sup> is the same as the 6<sup>th</sup>, up an octave.**

If that doesn't quite make sense right away, hopefully, this visual will help you see what I am talking about.

The diagram illustrates the notes of a C major scale across two octaves. The first octave (C-C') contains notes R, 3, 5, and 7. The second octave (C'-C'') contains notes 9, 11, and 13. Notes are circled in blue for the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> positions, and in red for the 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> positions. The notes are positioned on a five-line staff with a treble clef.

The notes circled in blue are the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> and circled in red are the 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup>. Same exact notes, but separated by an octave.

# Which extensions can you use on 7<sup>th</sup> chords?

Let's go through which extensions you can use on different kinds of 7<sup>th</sup> chords. This is especially important to understand for composing and for chordal accompaniment instruments.

Note that these are **un-altered extensions**. We will go over altered in a second, but it's important to mention because in some cases an altered extension can be used on a chord that would not use an un-altered extension. This will become clear.

## 9<sup>th</sup>

**The 7<sup>th</sup> chords it can be added to:** Major, dominant, minor, half-diminished.

**Formula:** R-3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>

**Example:** Cmaj9



*Note: You already know the formulas for all of the 7<sup>th</sup> chord qualities. To add a 9<sup>th</sup> to any of these chords, build the basic 7<sup>th</sup> chord first and then simply add the 9<sup>th</sup> on top. Easy!*

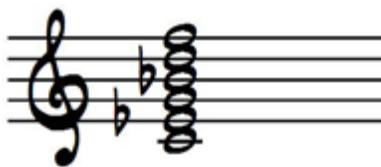
## 11<sup>th</sup>

**The 7<sup>th</sup> chords it can be added to:** minor, half-diminished, diminished

*Rule: the 11<sup>th</sup> can be added to chords with a b3 in it. Otherwise the 11<sup>th</sup> would clash with the major 3<sup>rd</sup>.*

**Formula:** R-3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>

**Example:** Cmin11



## 13<sup>th</sup>

**The 7<sup>th</sup> chords it can be added to:** major, dominant, minor.

**Formula:** R-3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>

**Example:** C13



*Note: 13<sup>th</sup> chords usually do not include the 11<sup>th</sup> in the chord.*

Now that we've covered chord extensions let's talk about **altered chord tones**. Here's a good definition.

### What's an altered chord tone?

An altered chord tone is any functioning chord tone (structural or an extension) that is raised or lowered by a half step to achieve a desired effect. This is often done for voice leading purposes and to achieve some kind of tension and release.

# Altered Chord Tones over Major 7ths

Possible alterations: b5, #5, #11, b13.

Note: While the 11th is not used in a major 7 as an un-altered extension, it is used as an altered chord tone, specifically a #11.

Additional Note: The b13 is not very common.

For the sake of being thorough, I think it's important to demonstrate what the difference between a b5 and a #11. If you think about it, they are the same note. In the key of C that would be a Gb/F#. Take a look.

The image shows two musical staves side-by-side. Each staff begins with a G clef. The first staff, labeled "C MAJ 7(b5)", has a bass note of G, a middle C note, a D note, and an F# note. The second staff, labeled "C MAJ 7(#11)", also has a bass note of G, a middle C note, a D note, and an F# note. The notes are represented by vertical stems with small circles at the top, and the F# note is explicitly labeled with a sharp sign.

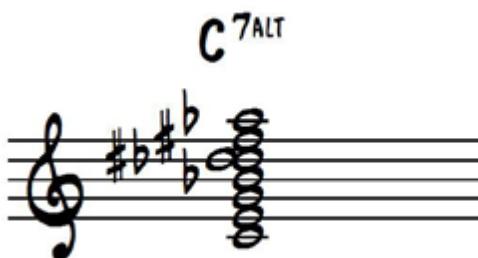
If it isn't obvious to you, the Cmaj7(b5) simply takes the existing perfect 5th and flats it. But the Cmaj7(#11) keeps the perfect 5th and instead adds the extended #11th on top of the chord.

# Altered Chord Tones over Dominant 7ths

Possible alterations: b5, #5, b9, #9, #11, b13.

Note: The dominant 7 chord has the most alterations possible. Also, the same as it was with the major 7, the 11th can be used with the dominant 7 as an alteration (#11).

One important chord to understand when it comes to dominant 7ths is the **alt chord**. If you ever see on a piece of sheet music "C7alt" that just means that some or all of the extensions are included in the chord and altered. Jazz musicians can choose to outline all of them, whether playing a chord or improvising, or picking and choose which ones are included.



It may be a lot of notes crunched up together on the staff, and not the easiest to read, but go ahead and try to identify all of the altered extensions in this notated C7alt chord.

# Altered Chord Tones over Minor 7ths

Possible alteration: Major 7th

Note: There are those that would alter extensions on a minor 7 chord, but in general it's uncommon and unconventional.

Some would not consider altering the b7 to a natural 7 in a minor 7 chord to be an "alteration." They would consider it a different chord altogether. Technically it's just a minor triad with a major 7 added on top. However, I like to think of it as an alteration.



And that's it! Those are the only 7th chord qualities with alterations. Some of this may seem very un-musical to you, and you would be correct. **This is jazz theory 101.** But trust me, knowing this stuff and being competent will give you a serious leg up on your jazz improvisation!

**PRACTICE CHALLENGE #8**

- Go through each one of these chord extensions and alterations and try notating them in at least six different keys. This will help you put to practice some of this information we just covered, and make sure you know how to come up with these chords. It may not be the most fun Practice Challenge so far, but it's good practice!

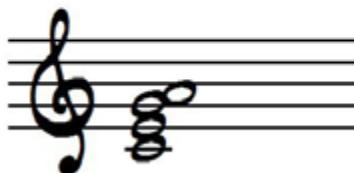
## The 6<sup>th</sup> and Sus4 Chord

There are two types of chords that we haven't discussed yet that don't fit the description of a 7th chord extension or alteration. Those two are **6th and sus4 chords**. It's important that you understand how to construct these because you will most certainly encounter them in your jazz studies.

In the case of both of these chords, the defining chord tone is replacing an existing chord tone.

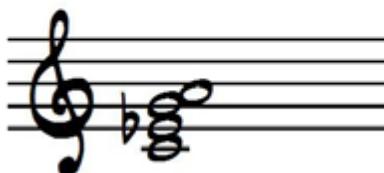
In the case of the 6<sup>th</sup> chord, the 6<sup>th</sup> is replacing the 7<sup>th</sup>. So a major 6<sup>th</sup> chord is spelled: **R-3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>**.

C<sup>6</sup>



A minor 6 chord is spelled: **R-b3-5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>**.

C MIN<sup>6</sup>



You'll hear the minor 6<sup>th</sup> replacing a minor 7<sup>th</sup> chord on various occasions in jazz music. The major 6 is a fairly common replacement for the major 7 and doesn't often affect an improviser's note choices in an extreme way.

In the case of a sus4 chord (suspended), the 4<sup>th</sup> is replacing the 3<sup>rd</sup> in the chord. So a regular suspended triad would be spelled: **R-4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>**.

Csus



Now if we were to make a dominant 7 chord suspended, which you will see from time to time, it would be spelled **Root-4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-b7**.

C7sus4



It's important that you have a good handle on all of these chords and understand how to construct them. The more you understand harmony and chord construction, the better off your jazz improvisation will be. I guarantee it!

Now, let's tie our scale and chord studies together with some chord/scale theory. This is the next logical step in this process and will help you understand how these things are related.

Go ahead, the next chapter awaits!

# CHAPTER 3

## Scales and Their Relationship to Chords

Remember when I told you in the Scales chapter that I cringe when people ask me “*What scale do I play over a... (dominant 7 chord)?*” Well, in this chapter I’ll be flirting with everything I usually preach against!

**To recap:** when it comes to playing jazz, using scales to navigate chord changes is not the way to go. In order to learn jazz language it needs to be listened to, mimicked, and learned primarily by ear.

### Scales are great for:

- » Learning your instrument.
- » Improving your technique.
- » Conceptualizing musical ideas.

However, it’s that last one (conceptualizing) that opens up the door for using scales in relationship to chords.

It can be incredibly useful to understand what scales you can use over different kinds of chords. Why? Because these represent the **pitch collections** that can be used as note choices.

I like thinking of scales as *pitch collections* because it's more visual. When I think of the word "scales" I think of a series of progressing notes going up or down in pitch. When I think of pitch collections, I think of a palette of notes I have to choose from in order to construct melodies. So when it comes to jazz improvisation, **think about scales as pitch collections.**

If you know the pitch collections that you can use over different kinds of chords, it can be a helpful tool, not for making melodies, but for knowing what notes are going to "work" and which ones "won't work".

I put those in parenthesis because when it comes to jazz there is no such thing as wrong notes. You can play any note you want as long as you can effectively resolve it to a diatonically stable note.

### **So here is a list of pitch collections (scales) that you can use over 7<sup>th</sup> chords.**

It's important to note that I am not listing every scale under the sun that you can superimpose over different kinds of chords. I don't wish to go that far because I'm more interested in having you do something musical with these scales. I'm going to list the basic scales that you can apply to different kinds of 7<sup>th</sup> chords. I will go a bit further in depth on major pentatonic scales just a little further ahead.

For each one of these I'm not going to spell out the scale unless I haven't gone over it already. Refer back to the Scales chapter if you need to refresh yourself on how to spell any of these scales.

To make this section as musical as possible, I will be giving you a lick for each of these chords that use notes from these pitch collections.

# Un-altered 7<sup>th</sup> Chords

## Major 7, 9, 11, 13

Scale: Major

### Exercise 22

#### Major 7 Lick

C MAJ<sup>7</sup>



## Minor 7, 6, 9, 11, 13

Scales: Natural minor, Dorian minor

Note: Dorian would best suite a minor 6 chord

### Exercise 23

#### Dorian Minor Lick

D MIN<sup>7</sup>



## Dominant 7, 9, 13, sus

Scale: Mixolydian

## Exercise 24

### *Mixolydian Lick*

C<sup>7</sup>

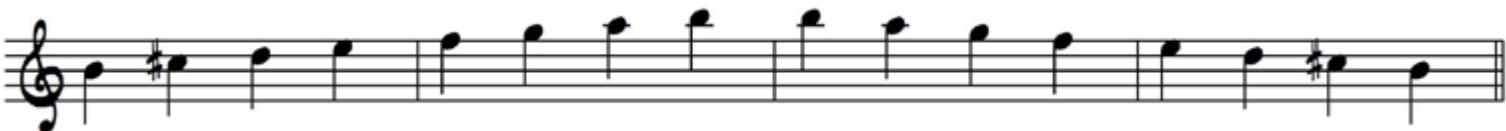


## Half-Diminished

**Scales:** Locrian, Locrian #2

I didn't go over Locrian #2 which is the 6<sup>th</sup> mode of the melodic minor, so I'll spell it out now. It's exactly what it sounds like: a Locrian scale but with a raised 2 (the b2 now becomes a natural 2).

*Locrian #2*



## Exercise 25

### *Locrian Lick*

B MIN<sup>7(b5)</sup>



# Diminished 7

Scale: Whole Half Diminished

## Exercise 26

*Diminished Lick*

C<sub>DIM</sub><sup>7</sup>



# Altered 7<sup>th</sup> Chords

## Major 7(b5/#11)

Scale: Lydian

For this exercise, I'm going to use a Cmaj7(#11) chord. Since the Lydian mode works over this chord, what is the parent scale? If you said G major you would be correct!

## Exercise 27

*Lydian Lick*

C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7(♯11)</sup>



## Major 7(#5)

**Scale:** Lydian Augmented (or Lydian #5)

We haven't gone over the Lydian Augmented scale yet. It's pretty simple though. You simply raise the 5<sup>th</sup> on the Lydian scale. Here it is written according to the parent scale of C major.

*Lydian Augmented*



For this next exercise I'm going to notate in C for the sake of clarity. I'm going to use Exercise 27 a reference, and copy the rhythm and the general melodic direction. However, I'm going to change some notes around to make it fit the chord better. This is a great example of taking a melodic idea and reshaping it to fit a different context.

### Exercise 28

*Lydian #5 Lick*

C MAJ 7(#5)



For observation sake, go back to Exercise 27, play it, and then play 28 to compare and contrast.

# Minor(maj7)

Scale: Melodic Minor

## Exercise 29

*Melodic Minor Lick*

C MIN<sup>(MAJ7)</sup>



# Dominant 7(#11)

Scale: Lydian Dominant

## Exercise 30

*Lydian Dominant Lick*

C 7(#11)



This is a rather quirky lick, but it's a lot of fun to play. Notice that it almost spans two octaves. If this is a challenge for the range of your instrument, great! If need be, see how you can adjust it to make it work for you.

# Dominant 7 (b9, #9, #11, b13)

**Scales:** Altered scale, Whole Half Diminished.

Note that the Whole Half Diminished would not be used on a b13/#5 chord.

## Exercise 31

### Altered Lick

The musical notation shows a lick in C7<sup>ALT</sup>. The key signature has one flat, indicating B-flat. The time signature is common time (4/4). The lick consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, starting with a B-flat eighth note, followed by a G-flat eighth note, an A-flat eighth note, a C-sharp eighth note, a D-sharp eighth note, a B-flat eighth note, a G-flat eighth note, a D-flat eighth note, a C-sharp eighth note, a B-flat eighth note, a G-flat eighth note, and a D-flat eighth note. The lick concludes with a half note rest.

## PRACTICE CHALLENGE #9

### Easier

- For each chord listed, create your own lick basing them off of the corresponding scales. One per chord type. Notate them or record them, or both.

### Challenging

- Take each lick that you compose and bring it through all 12 keys.

# How to Use Major and Minor Pentatonic Scales

I mentioned in the Scales chapter and earlier in this chapter that I would go over major and minor pentatonic scales in detail. The reason I am singling out these scales is because I believe in the right hands, they can be used in very musical ways. Additionally, I find that many musicians only use them in very limited contexts but don't realize that you can apply them to a variety of different chord types.

So I want to close off this chapter about scales and their relationships to chords with a lesson on major and minor pentatonic scales.

## What's a pentatonic scale?

A pentatonic scale is a musical scale with 5 notes (penta) per octave. The two most common are the major and minor pentatonic.

Check out a C major pentatonic scale.



The formula for a major pentatonic (in reference to a major scale) is: **R-2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>**.

You can easily think of the major pentatonic in relation to the major scale. Essentially leave out the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of the major scale and you have a major pentatonic scale.

And like all major scales, it has what we call a **relative minor**. We'll discuss this a little more in an upcoming chapter, but essentially for any major quality scale there is a relative minor that shares the exact same notes. This would be the Aeolian mode from a major scale, and the **minor pentatonic scale** has that same relationship with the major pentatonic.

If you want to create a minor pentatonic from a major pentatonic scale, start on the 5<sup>th</sup> scale degree (the 6<sup>th</sup> scale degree of a major scale).



The formula for a minor pentatonic (in reference to the natural minor scale) would be: **R-b3-4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-b7**.

You can think about the minor pentatonic as a natural minor scale without the 2<sup>nd</sup> and b6 scale degrees.

The other thing to recognize is that you can start the minor or major pentatonic **on any note of the scale**. It's all the same scale just re-arranged, no different from how the major modes work. In other words, if I want to play an Amin7 chord I can play a C major pentatonic (C would be b3 of the minor pentatonic). Or I can start the minor pentatonic on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, or b7.

It's pretty self-explanatory, but I'll demonstrate so you can get the visual.

For our sake let's refer to these "modes" of the minor pentatonic in term of what scale degree they represent in the natural minor scale. You'll see what I mean.

### Minor pentatonic starting on b3



### Minor pentatonic starting on 4<sup>th</sup>



### Minor pentatonic starting on 5<sup>th</sup>



### Minor pentatonic starting on b7



I show you all of this so plainly because we are now going to go over **what different kinds of chords** you can apply the major and minor pentatonic scale to. Depending on the chord, sometimes you may want to think of it in terms of starting the scale on the root. Other times, you won't need to.

Again, I want to go over this because too often musicians don't use the minor and major pentatonic scales to their full potential. They only get a fraction of the mileage they could get out of it! The goal here is to be informed on how you can use these scales and how to make them as musical as possible.

I'm going to show you different chords you can use the **A minor pentatonic or C major pentatonic** over. Now keep in mind, I may say you can play an A minor pentatonic over such and such a chord, but since A minor and C major they are relative to each other you can think of it as either one. Let's go over **9 ways you can use the pentatonics**.

## 1. Root minor chords

This is the first of the obvious uses of the minor pentatonic. This one makes a lot of sense right? It's a minor scale with 5 notes so playing this scale over a minor scale is going to make sense. When I say **root** minor chords, I mean that the root of the chord is the same root of the scale. So you can play an **A minor pentatonic over an Amin7 (or just Am) chord**.

A MIN<sup>7</sup>

A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The staff shows a series of eighth-note chords. Above the staff, the label "A MIN<sup>7</sup>" is written. The chords shown are A minor (A-C-E), D minor (D-F#-A), G major (G-B-D), and C major (C-E-G). The melody consists of eighth-note patterns that align with these chords.

## 2. Root Dominant 7 Chords

An A minor pentatonic can be played over an A7 chord. This is most commonly applied in a blues situation. The scale does skip the 3rd of A7(C#), which would spell out the difference between a minor and a dominant chord. Regardless, this grouping of notes works out well for a bluesy sound.

A<sup>7</sup>

A musical staff in G clef and 4/4 time signature. Above the staff, the label "A7" is written. The staff consists of ten vertical stems, each ending in a small circle, representing eighth-note chords. The pattern repeats every two measures: a single stem, a double stem, a single stem, and a double stem.

## 3. The relative major chord

I've already mentioned this, but I'll reiterate. The A minor pentatonic scale is really the same as a C major pentatonic scale, only starting on an A note. In a musical situation, what note you start on doesn't really matter. This is only just a way to conceptualize it. I have it notated as a C major pentatonic (or an A minor pentatonic starting on the b3).

C MAJ<sup>7</sup>

A musical staff in G clef and 4/4 time signature. Above the staff, the label "C MAJ7" is written. The staff consists of twelve vertical stems, each ending in a small circle, representing eighth-note chords. The pattern repeats every three measures: a single stem, a single stem, a single stem, a double stem, a single stem, and a double stem.

## 4. The minor ii chord of the relative major

The next several examples deal with understanding how 7<sup>th</sup> chords harmonize with the major scale. This is exactly what we will be going over in the next chapter. If you don't understand this yet, you can either skip ahead and read up on that, or check this out now and it will make more sense later.

In this case, we would be playing a C major (or A minor) pentatonic scale over **D minor 7**. More accurately, you could play a **Dmin9** or a **Dmin11**, since both of those extensions are hit in the C major pentatonic. Of course, you could also just play a D minor pentatonic over a Dmin7 chord. I have this notated as a C major pent starting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or an A minor pent starting on the 4<sup>th</sup> depending on how you look at it.

**D MIN<sup>7</sup>**



Musical notation for a D minor 7 chord in 4/4 time. The notes are: D, F#, A, C. The bass note is D.

## 5. The major IV chord of the relative major

If we are thinking in the key of C major, the IV chord is **F major 7**. Think in terms of the major scale: C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C. The 6th note of the F major scale is played in the A minor pentatonic, so if you wanted to be more specific, you could play an Fmaj13 chord. I have this notated as an A minor pentatonic.

**F MAJ<sup>7</sup>**



Musical notation for an F major 7 chord in 4/4 time. The notes are: F, A, C, E. The bass note is F.

## 6. The V7sus chord of the relative major

In the key of C this would be a G7sus. You could just play a regular V dominant chord, but since the major and relative minor pentatonic emphasizes the sus4, it would be appropriate to think of it this way. In fact, it would be more accurate to play a G13sus chord since the 6th is also played.

**G<sup>13</sup><sub>SUS</sub>**



Musical notation for a G13sus chord in 4/4 time. The notes are: G, B, D, E, G. The bass note is G.

You could play a C major or A minor pentatonic over any of the chords in the key center of C major, but for some there are better options. The most obvious one is playing an E minor pentatonic over the iii chord (Emin7).

But the one that deserves a little bit more attention is the **vii half diminished chord (Bmin7b5)**. This chord is also thought of as the ii chord in the relative minor (A minor), but the A minor pentatonic doesn't highlight the most important note in that chord: the flat 5 (F).

## 7. The ii minor pentatonic over the vii chord

The minor pentatonic scale that would highlight that b5 is the **D minor pentatonic scale**, therefore this is a better option to play over this chord. If you would prefer, think about it as playing a minor pentatonic a minor 3<sup>rd</sup> up from a half-diminished chord.

B MIN<sup>7(b5)</sup>

A musical staff in G clef and common time. It shows a sequence of notes: B, A, D, G, E, B, A, D, G, E, B. These notes represent the B minor pentatonic scale, which highlights the important note (flat 5/F) in the Bmin7(b5) chord.

## 8. Minor pentatonic a half step down from a major 7(b5)

This example is not related to the key center as the previous have been. This is a great option for organizing a grouping of notes to play over this chord. In this particular case we are playing an **A minor pentatonic scale over a Bbmaj7(b5) chord**. Why? Because the scale starts on the 7th of Bb major and the pentatonic highlights the most important note in this chord: **the flat 5 (E)**.

B<sup>b</sup> MAJ<sup>7(b5)</sup>

A musical staff in G clef and common time. It shows a sequence of notes: A, G, C, E, B, A, G, C, E, B. These notes represent the A minor pentatonic scale, which highlights the important note (flat 5/E) in the Bbmaj7(b5) chord.

## 9. Minor pentatonics over a ii-V-I

We will go over chord progressions in detail in upcoming chapters, but I think it's worthwhile to show you how you can use pentatonics over more than one chord. A ii-V-I is an important chord progression in jazz and other styles of music, so I will use it as an example.

Take a look and play through this exercise.

### Exercise 32

The musical score for Exercise 32 consists of two staves of 16th-note patterns. The first staff starts with **D MIN<sup>7</sup>**, followed by **G<sup>7ALT</sup>**, and then **C MAJ<sup>7(#11)</sup>**. The second staff continues the pattern. The chords are indicated above the staff, and the notes are represented by vertical stems with small horizontal dashes indicating pitch and rhythm.

In this exercise there are 3 minor pentatonic scales being used:

**Dmin7:** A minor pentatonic.

**G7alt:** A# (or Bb) minor pentatonic.

**Cmaj7(#11):** B minor pentatonic.

The musical score for Exercise 32 is shown again, but with labels below each staff identifying the pentatonic scales. The first staff is labeled "A minor pent", the second "A# minor pent", and the third "B minor pent". The chords are indicated above the staff, and the notes are represented by vertical stems with small horizontal dashes indicating pitch and rhythm.

They move up chromatically, up one scale and down the next. In this case, the I chord has an altered extension (#11).

We've already gone over how the A minor pentatonic works over a Dmin7, and in this case, we are starting the scale on D. We've also already covered the concept of playing a minor pentatonic scale a half step down from a maj7(b5) chord.

The new member to the group here is the **A# pentatonic over the G7alt chord**. You can think of this as just playing a minor pentatonic a **minor third up from the root of a given dominant chord**. Essentially you are hitting all of the possible alterations in a dominant 7 chord (#9, b9, #11, #5). It may sound a little bit "out" but when you resolve to the Cmaj7(b5) it has a really nice sound.

I won't give you a specific Practice Challenge for pentatonic scales, but I would encourage you to explore them and try to work them into your improvisational approach. These scales can be utilized in a musical way if handled correctly, so go for it and have fun with them!

# C H A P T E R

# 4

## Chord Progressions

### Chord Progressions

Do you remember the Jazz Improv Rule I gave you at the beginning of the book?

**The Jazz Improv Rule:**

To become a better jazz improviser, you need to understand jazz harmony.

I think it's worth repeating because there is so much truth in it. The best jazz improvisers, though they may not be thinking about it consciously while they're playing, understand how harmony works. They know how it functions and moves.

So far we have studied scales and chords. We've learned how to construct them and have applied different technical exercises and musical applications to them. We've also tied them together and discovered how scales can be used as pitch collections over different chord types.

Now it's time to take a look at **chord progressions**. This is the next logical topic to cover in our jazz improv studies. We'll be looking at how chord progressions are created, which ones you should be most familiar with, and some important jazz song forms to know.

Understanding chord progressions and how they work is pivotal for becoming a better jazz musician. Here we go!

# Harmonizing Scales with 7<sup>th</sup> Chords

Something important for all musicians (especially in jazz) to understand is that you can take any scale and harmonize it with chords. This is done by identifying the notes of a scale and then building chords off of them using only notes within that scale. You can do this using triads and you can do this using 7<sup>th</sup> chords. Since 7<sup>th</sup> chords are so common in jazz we will be focusing on them.

Now you may be wondering...

## Why is this important?

- » **It helps us understand how chord progressions work.** In jazz standards, we see a lot of moving harmony going on. For example: ii-V-I's and I-vi-ii-V-I's. It's important to understand how we come up with these chord progressions.
- » **It helps us identify how chords can be related by a consonant scale.** What does a Dbmaj7 and an Ab7 have in common? In a diatonic situation they share the same parent scale and key center.
- » **It helps us become better composers.** Understanding how diatonic chord progressions are formed is a very important cornerstone to establish **if you want to write your own music.**
- » All in all, if we want to understand how chord progressions work from the ground up, learning how to harmonize scales is an excellent starting point.

# How to Harmonize a Major Scale with 7<sup>th</sup> Chords

Let's start with the major scale, and to remain consistent with the rest of the book, let's work with the C major scale. You already know it well, but here it is again.



Here are the 2 big questions:

1. How do I build 7<sup>th</sup> chords off of the notes in the C major scale?
2. How do I know which quality of chord each note will represent? Major, minor, dominant, half-diminished, diminished?

I'm going to teach you this in a slightly unorthodox way: **I'm going to give you the answers first and then explain how I got them.** Take a look at the chart on the following page.

## MAJOR DIATONIC SERIES OF 7TH CHORDS

C	D	E	F	G	A	B
Maj7	Min7	Min7	Maj7	Dom7	Min7	Halfdim
Cmaj7	Dmin7	Emin7	Fmaj7	G7	Amin7	Bmin7(b5)
I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii(b5)

**Black**= the notes in the C major scale.

**Red**= the quality of the chord built on top of the given scale degree.

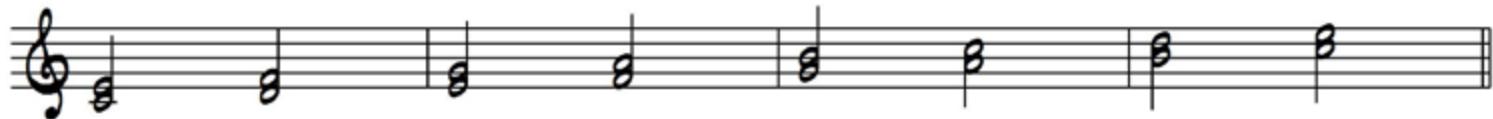
**Blue**= the full chord name pertaining to the root note and the chord quality.

**Green**= the Roman numeral representing the scale degree.

For the Roman numerals the number represents the scale degree. A capital numeral means it is either a major 7 or dominant 7 chord, and a lowercase numeral means it is a minor chord. This is where chord progressions like the ii-V-I are derived from (more on that coming up).

You could just take my word for it. The *Major Diatonic Series of 7<sup>th</sup> Chords* chart says that the IV chord is a major 7 chord, so therefore the IV chord in the key of C is Fmaj7. But of course I want you to understand how to harmonize the major scale with 7<sup>th</sup> chords, not just memorize the chart.

So let's go back some steps and see how we got these answers. We need to create 7<sup>th</sup> chords out of each of these notes in the major scale. Therefore we need to stack a 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> on top of each note. For starters, let's just stack thirds on top of each of the notes in the C major scale.



The question you may ask is **how do I know what kind of third to stack on top of the root? Is it a minor 3<sup>rd</sup> or a major 3<sup>rd</sup>?**

**The rule is:** whatever note you stack on top has to be diatonic to the scale. In other words, if the note you stack on top is not in the C major scale (ex. Eb), it would be incorrect. If the note you stack on top is in the scale, it will be correct. Make sense?

You may also notice that once you stack the proper 3<sup>rd</sup> (E) on top of the first note in the scale (C), you can just stack thirds on top of every other note by just walking up the scale starting on E (E-F-G-A-B-C-D-E).

Now let's stack the 5<sup>ths</sup> on top of the 3<sup>rds</sup>.

C      D MIN      E MIN      F      G      A MIN      B DIM      C

You should already know the formulas for all of the different types of triads, as we discussed this in the previous chapter on chord construction. If you go through each one of these triads and identify the intervals, you will discover that the triad qualities are as I have represented them. Go for it, check me on it!

The same rule applies to adding the 5ths. As long as the 5<sup>th</sup> is diatonic to the scale, you are in the clear.

Of course, there is only one more note to stack on top of these triads to make them 7<sup>th</sup> chords. Let's stack the 7ths on top of these 5ths.

A musical staff with a treble clef and four measures. Each measure contains a vertical stack of three notes, representing a triad. Above each stack, the chord name is written in capital letters. The chords are: CMAJ<sup>7</sup>, DMIN<sup>7</sup>, EMIN<sup>7</sup>, FMAJ<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>, AMIN<sup>7</sup>, BMIN<sup>7(b5)</sup>, and CMAJ<sup>7</sup>. The staff has four measures, with the last measure being a repeat of the first.

Go ahead and confirm these chords for yourself. Do the intervals accurately represent the chords symbols I've labeled? You'll notice that the vii chord is now a half diminished, while when it was a triad it was diminished. This is because the 7<sup>th</sup> is only flattened once and not twice.

So now scroll back to the Major Diatonic Series of 7<sup>th</sup> Chords chart. Everything checks out. It's important that you memorize this chart, as this is a fundamental piece of knowledge that you need to know.

# How to Harmonize Minor Scales with 7<sup>th</sup> Chords

We will discuss some important chord progressions in jazz that we can draw from the diatonic series, but let's first go over harmonizing minor scales with 7<sup>th</sup> chords. I will cover **natural minor, harmonic minor** and **melodic minor**.

First, let's harmonize the **natural minor**.



I would encourage you, having seen how to harmonize the major scale to see if you can do it yourself. But I'll skip showing you how to stack the 3rds and 5ths and just demonstrate the 7<sup>th</sup> chords.

C<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>    D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7(5)</sup>    E<sup>♭</sup><sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>    F<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>    G<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>    A<sup>♭</sup><sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>    B<sup>♭</sup><sub>7</sub>    C<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>

Hopefully this is fairly self-explanatory. Again, notice how every note that has been stacked is true to the natural minor scale.

Now let's go over the **harmonic minor scale**.



As you should already know, the difference between a natural minor and a harmonic minor is the natural 7. It's a small change, but this will most certainly result in some different chord qualities than seen in the natural minor harmonization.

A musical staff in G clef, B-flat key signature, showing eight chords. The chords are labeled above the staff: C<sub>MIN</sub><sup>(MAJ7)</sup>, D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7(b5)</sup>, E<sup>b</sup><sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7(5)</sup>, F<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>, A<sup>b</sup><sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>, B<sub>DIM</sub><sup>7</sup>, and C<sub>MIN</sub><sup>(MAJ7)</sup>. The chords are represented by vertical stacks of three notes each.

Keep in mind that wherever a B is stacked in a chord it must be natural and not flat because we are dealing with the harmonic minor scale. It's interesting to see how just that note change alters four of the chord qualities.

Moving on, let's take a look at the **melodic minor scale**.

A musical staff in G clef, B-flat key signature, showing a sequence of notes representing the melodic minor scale. The notes are: C, D, E-flat, F, G, A, B, C.

Remember that the difference between a natural minor and a melodic minor is a natural 6 and 7. As I suggested with the harmonic minor, see if you can come up with the 7<sup>th</sup> chords for the melodic minor yourself.

A musical staff in G clef, B-flat key signature, showing eight chords. The chords are labeled above the staff: C<sub>MIN</sub><sup>(MAJ7)</sup>, D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>, E<sup>b</sup><sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7(5)</sup>, F<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>, A<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7(b5)</sup>, B<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7(b5)</sup>, and C<sub>MIN</sub><sup>(MAJ7)</sup>. The chords are represented by vertical stacks of three notes each.

So there you go! Harmonizing major and the basic minor scales with 7<sup>th</sup> chords should no longer be a mystery.

But since one of the primary reasons I am showing you this is to help you understand how chord progressions are formed, it would be important to show you the **Minor Diatonic Series of 7<sup>th</sup> Chords**. I'll show it to you and then explain.

## MINOR DIATONIC SERIES OF 7TH CHORDS

C	D	Eb	F	G	A	Bb
Min7	Halfdim	Maj7	Min7	Dom7	Halfdim	Dom7
Cmin7	Dmin7(b5)	Emaj7	Fmin7	G7	Amin7(b5)	Bb7
I	ii(b5)	III	iv	V	vi(b5)	VII

The Minor Diatonic Series of 7<sup>th</sup> Chords is based off of the natural minor scale. However, the **V chord is borrowed from the harmonic and melodic minor harmonization**. Instead of it being a minor 7 it is turned into a dominant 7 chord. Why? The V chord in traditional harmony is almost always a dominant 7 chord. The V often resolves to the I chord and therefore the V in the harmonic and melodic minor is appropriate in this case. In the same way, the **vi chord is borrowed from the melodic minor**.

Understanding how to harmonize major and minor scales is really important for understanding jazz harmony,

Personally, I like to be thorough. That's what this book is all about. Starting from the ground up so that you are set up for the best success possible in your jazz improvisation.

In this next section we are going to go over important chord progressions you should know as a jazz musician. They are all derived from the Major and Minor Diatonic Series of 7<sup>th</sup> chords. Once you have this concept down, you've unlocked the door to an incredible world in jazz improvisation.

# Important Jazz Chord Progressions

Let's start identifying some important chord progressions you will need to know. You will need to be quite familiar with these, because these will present themselves time and time again, in some shape or form throughout your jazz studies.

For each one of these progressions, you will need to refer to either the Major or the Minor Diatonic Series of 7<sup>th</sup> chords charts I provided for you in the last section. Those charts indicate how we arrived at each chords function, quality, and letter name.

## The Basic Chord Progressions

### ii-V-I

This is by far the most commonly seen chord progression in jazz. You'll want to know this one inside and out, forwards and backwards.

### Long ii-V-I

A musical staff in G clef and 4/4 time. It consists of three measures. The first measure contains a D minor 7th chord (D MIN⁷) with a Roman numeral II underneath. The second measure contains a G 7th chord (G⁷) with a Roman numeral V underneath. The third measure contains a C major 7th chord (C MAJ⁷) with a Roman numeral I underneath. The staff has vertical bar lines separating the measures.

We're in the key of C major (Concert C, Bb, or Eb, depending on your instrument). The Roman Numerals are included underneath the staff.

If you look back at the Major Diatonic Series of 7<sup>th</sup> Chords you'll confirm that the ii chord in C is Dmin7, the V chord is G7, and the I chord of course, is Cmaj7. This chord progression will be pivotal for you to recognize and understand. I call it a "long" ii-V-I because each chord lasts one bar.

Now, I want to keep things musical. **So I'm going to give you licks to practice for each of these chord progressions.** This is good jazz language for you to work on. When we are done with this chapter on chord progressions, we will be moving on to Part 2, which is all about learning jazz language. So these will be good exercises to start getting you headed in the right direction.

### Exercise 33

D MIN<sup>7</sup>

G<sup>7</sup>

C MAJ<sup>7</sup>



#### Short ii-V-I

D MIN<sup>7</sup>

G<sup>7</sup>

C MAJ<sup>7</sup>



This is what I call a short ii-V-I, which means the ii and the V chords last only **two beats** each, and the I chord lasts **4 beats**. Jazz is packed full of both long and short ii-V-I's.

From an improviser's standpoint, whether a ii-V-I is long or short makes a difference. If a ii-V-I is short you will have to react to the chord changes more quickly. If it's long you get two extra beats during the ii and V chords.

## Exercise 34

A musical staff in G major. It starts with a D minor 7th chord (D, F#, A, C) indicated by a bass note D and three eighth notes. This is followed by a G7 chord (G, B, D, E) indicated by a bass note G and three eighth notes. Finally, a C major 7th chord (C, E, G, B) is shown with a bass note C and three eighth notes. The staff ends with a dash.

### Minor ii-V-i

The minor ii-V-I is the same concept as the major ii-V-I. Go back to the Minor Diatonic Series of 7<sup>th</sup> chord and you'll see what I mean.

### Long minor ii-V-i

A musical staff in D minor (two flats). It shows a long progression of chords: D minor 7th (b5), G7, and C minor 7th. Below the staff, the Roman numerals ii, V, and i are written under their respective chords. The time signature is 4/4 throughout.

The minor ii-V-i come up often in a jazz context. In fact, you'll constantly see a combination of major and minor ii-V-i's in hundreds of jazz standards. These are some of the most common chord progressions you will come across, so make sure you recognize them and understand how they work.

Let's take a look at a minor ii-V-i lick.

## Exercise 35

A musical staff in G clef, 4/4 time, and D major (two sharps). It shows three chords: D<sub>MIN</sub>7(5), G7(9), and C<sub>MIN</sub>7. The first chord has a duration of 3 beats. The second chord has a duration of 3 beats. The third chord has a duration of 3 beats.

### Short minor ii-v-i

A musical staff in G clef, 4/4 time, and D major (two sharps). It shows the harmonic structure: ii, V, i. The ii chord is indicated by a vertical line with a bracket below it labeled "ii". The V chord is indicated by a vertical line with a bracket below it labeled "V". The i chord is indicated by a vertical line with a bracket below it labeled "i".

The same as the short major ii-V-I, the short minor ii-V-i has the ii and the V chord only lasting for 2 beats each. Again, as an improviser the adjustment is that you will need to respond to the chord changes quicker.

## Exercise 36

A musical staff in G clef, 4/4 time, and D major (two sharps). It shows a more complex harmonic structure: D<sub>MIN</sub>7(5), G7(9), and C<sub>MIN</sub>7. The first chord has a duration of 3 beats. The second chord has a duration of 3 beats. The third chord has a duration of 3 beats.

## I-vi-ii-V

The I-vi-ii-V chord progression is another common one you need to know. Most notably, but certainly not limited to, you will see this progression in song forms such as “rhythm changes” which we will cover soon.

Once again I will encourage you to reference the Major Diatonic Series of 7<sup>th</sup> chords, so you can clarify the origin of the chord changes.

### Long I-vi-ii-V

A musical staff in G major (C clef) with four measures. The first measure is labeled 'I' below a Cmaj7 chord. The second measure is labeled 'vi or VI' below an Amin7 chord, with an A7 chord written above it. The third measure is labeled 'ii' below a Dmin7 chord. The fourth measure is labeled 'V' below a G7 chord.

You'll notice that I notated an A7 above the Amin7. Both of these chords represent the vi chord. If you look at the Major Diatonic Series of 7<sup>th</sup> Chords chart, you'll note that the diatonically correct quality of the vi chord would be a minor 7.

However, jazz musicians often turn this chord into a dominant 7 chord. Why? It allows for some more colorful voice leading. We'll talk about voice leading more in Part 2 of this book. But remember how we talked about the relative major and minor earlier?

Remember that the Cmaj7 and the Amin7 have mostly the same notes in them.

**Cmaj7:** C-E-G-B

**Amin7:** A-C-E-G

In fact, the only different note between the two is the A in the Amin7, which is the 6th in the key of C. In other words, they more or less sound the same except for the root.

One way to offer more distinction and more voice leading is to make the vi chord a dominant 7 chord (VI). This adds the C# (3<sup>rd</sup> of A7) into the mix. This is something you should take note of as a common substitution in jazz.

In this next lick, I'm going to add the I chord at the end to make a smooth resolution from the V chord.

## Exercise 37

C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>      A<sup>7</sup>      D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>      G<sup>7</sup>      C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>

### Short I-vi-ii-V

C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>      A<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>      D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>      G<sup>7</sup>

I      vi or VI      ii      V

The short I-vi-ii-V in general is more common than the long I-vi-ii-V. The vi chord is often thrown into a progression as a connector from the I to the ii. Therefore, learning jazz language over short I-vi-ii-V's is important.

## Exercise 38

C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>      A<sup>7</sup>      D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>      G<sup>7</sup>      C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>

## Minor i-vi-ii-V

Now let's bring this progression into the minor. Refer to the Minor Diatonic Series of 7<sup>th</sup> chords. You'll see this in many jazz standards as well.

## Long minor i-vi-ii-V

A musical staff in G clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of two flats. It consists of four measures separated by vertical bar lines. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: C<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>, A<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7(b5)</sup>, D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7(b5)</sup>, and G<sup>7</sup>. Below the staff, the Roman numerals i, vi, ii, and V are centered under their respective measures. The first measure has a single vertical line below the staff, while the others have double vertical lines.

The long minor i-vi-ii-V is less common than the short minor i-vi-ii-V which we will go over in a second. However, it is just as important to master this chord progression in its longer form.

Remember that the vi chord in the minor diatonic series is being borrowed from the melodic minor harmonization of 7<sup>th</sup> chords. Therefore it is a half diminished chord. The challenge of this progression is learning how to improvise over two half diminished chords in a row.

## Exercise 39

A musical score in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. It consists of five measures. The first measure shows a C minor 7 chord. The second measure shows an A minor 7(b5) chord. The third measure shows a D minor 7(b5) chord. The fourth measure shows a G7 chord. The fifth measure shows a C minor 7 chord. The lick itself starts with a eighth note followed by a sixteenth note, then a eighth note followed by a sixteenth note, and so on, with some grace notes and slurs.

I've added the minor i chord to the end of this phrase to achieve the resolution from the V chord. This particular lick riffs off of a set rhythmic pattern and adjusts with the chord changes. This is a great technique to use in your jazz improvisation.

### Short minor i-vi-ii-V

A musical score in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. It consists of four measures. The first measure shows a C minor 7 chord with a bass note 'i' below it. The second measure shows an A minor 7(b5) chord with a bass note 'vi' below it. The third measure shows a D minor 7(b5) chord with a bass note 'ii' below it. The fourth measure shows a G7 chord with a bass note 'V' below it. The bass notes 'i', 'vi', 'ii', and 'V' are explicitly labeled below the corresponding chords.

Here is the more common of the two. You'll see this progression happen in jazz standards when a minor ii-V-i is repeated more than once. The vi chord is acting as a connector between the I and the ii.

## Exercise 40

The musical score consists of a single staff in common time (4/4). The key signature is one flat, indicating C minor. The progression is as follows:

- Measure 1: C<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>. Bass notes: A, G, F, E.
- Measure 2: A<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7(b5)</sup>. Bass notes: D, C, B, A.
- Measure 3: D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7(b5)</sup>. Bass notes: G, F, E, D.
- Measure 4: G<sup>7ALT</sup>. Bass notes: C, B, A, G.
- Measure 5: C<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>. Bass notes: F, E, D, C.

I notated the G7 as "alt" because if you look at it, the Eb is the b13, and the Bb is the #9.

It should be made clear that if you ever look at a lead sheet and see a plain 7<sup>th</sup> chord written, this does not mean you have to play only unaltered notes. Quite the contrary! Great jazz musicians are constantly adding extensions and alterations to chords within progressions. **The idea is to know the rules, but then break them.** Know what you "can" and "cannot" do, but go out there and make some music!

These are what I consider to be the **basic chord progressions**. Sure, there are others, but these are foundational. You need to know these forwards and backward:

**ii-V-I** (long and short)

**Minor ii-V-I** (long and short)

**I-vi-ii-V** (long and short)

**Minor i-vi-ii-V** (long and short)

# Common Substitutions, Alternatives, and Add-ons

I think it's important that we go over a handful of important substitutions, alternatives and add-ons to the basic chord progressions.

The basic chord progressions are foundational, but they are just scratching the surface. While I won't be going over every possibility, I'll cover some key ones that you should be in the know about.

## iii Replaces the I

In jazz, you will often see the iii chord replacing the I chord. For example, in the key of C, a Cmaj7 is replaced by an Emin7.

A musical staff in 4/4 time. The top line shows four chords: EMIN<sup>7</sup>, A<sup>7</sup>, DMIN<sup>7</sup>, and G<sup>7</sup>. Below the staff, the Roman numerals iii, VI, ii, and V are written under each chord respectively.

Let's continue working on some licks to go along with these chord progressions. I think it's important to see how these play out musically, and I'll give you a great Practice Challenge at the end of this chapter.

### Exercise 41

A musical staff in 4/4 time. The top line shows five chords: EMIN<sup>7</sup>, A<sup>7</sup>, DMIN<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>, and CMaj<sup>7</sup>. Below the staff, a lick consisting of eighth-note patterns is shown over the first four chords, followed by a single note over the fifth chord.

## #i Diminished Replaces the VI

A classic substitution is the #i diminished for the dominant VI chord. Most often this is seen in the context of a I-VI-ii-V progression. But when you sub the #i diminished for the VI it becomes: I-#idim-ii-V.

A musical staff in 4/4 time. It shows four chords: C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>, C<sup>#DIM</sup><sub>DIM</sub><sup>7</sup>, D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>, and G<sup>7</sup>. Below the staff, the Roman numerals I, #idim, ii, and V are written under each chord respectively.

Let's try out a lick over this progression. Remember, I am adding the I chord at the end to make for a good resolution.

### Exercise 42

A musical staff in 4/4 time. It shows a lick starting with C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>, followed by a sixteenth-note pattern over C<sup>#DIM</sup><sub>DIM</sub><sup>7</sup>, then D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7(b9)</sup>, and finally C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup> again. The progression is I-#idim-ii-V-G7(b9)-Cmaj7.

Why is the #i diminished a good substitution for the dominant VI chord?

I'm glad you asked! Remember in the Scales and Their Relationship to Chords section I said that you could play a Half Whole diminished scale over an altered dominant?

This plays right into that same concept. Let's backtrack for a second and discuss the nature of diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chords.

You may remember in the Scales chapter how we talked about the diminished scale being **symmetrical**. Well, so are the chord tones of a diminished 7th.

Let's review and look at the different inversions of a diminished 7 chord.

The image shows a musical staff with four measures. Each measure contains three notes representing a diminished 7 chord. The first measure is labeled "Root Position". The second measure is labeled "1st Inversion". The third measure is labeled "2nd Inversion". The fourth measure is labeled "3rd Inversion". The staff has a treble clef, a key signature of two flats, and a common time signature. The notes are represented by vertical stems with small circles indicating pitch.

These will be familiar if you have been following along since the Chords chapter. Check out this important rule:

#### **The Diminished 7 Symmetry Rule:**

Every chord tone in a diminished 7 chord can be moved up or down in **minor thirds** to create another diminished 7 inversion.

Take a look at the Root Position diminished 7. Trace each note in the chord and move them up a minor 3<sup>rd</sup>. If you do this correctly, you will see it perfectly creates a 1<sup>st</sup> inversion diminished 7.

I know this can be confusing, so make sure you take the time to pull out your instrument and do this if you don't already understand.

**It's important for you to understand the symmetrical movement of diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chords for you to understand this next rule.**

#### **The Dominant 7 and Diminished 7 Rule:**

A diminished 7 chord can replace an altered dominant 7 chord (commonly b9 or #9) when the root of the diminished 7 is a half-step above the root (b9) of the altered dominant 7, a major 3<sup>rd</sup>, perfect 5<sup>th</sup>, or minor 7<sup>th</sup>.

Let me explain in further detail.

When a diminished 7 replaces a dominant 7 chord, it implies that the dominant 7 is altered in some way.

Let's look at an A7(b9) (the VI in C major) and a C#dim7 (#idim in C major), side by side so we can compare the notes.

A 7(b9)

C#DIM7

**A7(b9):** A-C#-E-G-Bb

**C#dim7:** C#-E-G-Bb

Notice the difference? The only note that doesn't exist in both is A, which is the root of the VI chord.

Now consider The Dominant 7 and Diminished 7 Rule again. We know that a diminished 7 chord moves symmetrically in minor 3rds to create new inversions. But if you think about it, you can also label those inversions diminished 7 chords with an entirely different root.

For example, a C#dim7 chord can have four different bass notes according to the Root Position and inversions.

**C#-E-G-Bb**

All four of the notes are separated by minor 3rds, just like the rule states. But because these chords move symmetrically, we can label them as different diminished chords, rather than inversions.

## C#dim7-Edim7-Gdim7-Bbdim7

Now you may not realize it yet, but this has HUGE implications.

**If you think about it even further you will realize that there are only 3 possible diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chords you can play. What!?**

You can label them however you want, but ultimately they are all just inversions of other diminished 7 chords.

Let me spell it out for you. Here are the 3 possible diminished 7 chords, in all of their different labeling.

- 1.** Cdim7-Ebdim7-Gbdim7-Adim7
- 2.** C#dim7-Edim7-Gdim7-Bbdim7
- 3.** Ddim7-Fdim7-Abdim7-Bdim7

The first row of diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chords are all the same chord. The second row of diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chord are all the same chord. The third row of diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chords are all the same chord.

Now count up all of the different roots listed: **12**. That's all 12 keys.

I don't know about you, but this is quite phenomenal to me! **Because this also means I can take any altered dominant 7 chord and substitute a diminished 7 chord using the roots of either the major 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, minor 7<sup>th</sup>, or b9.**

I know this was a long, brainy explanation of why the #idim7 can replace the VI dominant, but I think it's worth the explanation. You can get a lot of mileage out of both the Diminished 7 Symmetry Rule, and the Dominant 7 and Diminished Rule.

## I-IV-iii-VI to Turn Around to a ii-V-I

Jazz musicians are always looking for different ways to cycle chords. In traditional jazz harmony, the harmonic movement is always trying to get back to the I chord.

Whenever the purpose of a chord progression is to come back to the I chord it's called a **turnaround**. One such popular turnaround is the **I-IV-iii-VI**, which cycles into the ii-V-I.

A musical staff in G major (Clef: G, Key Signature: 1 sharp) with a 4/4 time signature. It shows four measures: C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup> (labeled I), F<sup>7</sup> (labeled IV), E<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup> (labeled iii), and A<sup>7</sup> (labeled VI). The notes are eighth notes, and there are vertical bar lines between each measure.

Take a look at the IV chord. To be diatonically accurate, the IV chord would be major 7, however, jazz musicians usually turn it into a dominant 7 chord. The major 7 can be used but is less common. The VI chord is usually a dominant 7 in this scenario.

Here's a lick to try over this progression. I have added the ii chord at the end for a smooth resolution.

### Exercise 43

A musical staff in G major (Clef: G, Key Signature: 1 sharp) with a 4/4 time signature. It shows a lick starting over the I-IV-iii-VI turnaround. The lick consists of eighth-note patterns: C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>, F<sup>7</sup>, E<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>, A<sup>7ALT</sup>, and D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>. The lick ends with a half note followed by a rest.

## Chromatic ii-V's

Jazz musicians will often utilize what we call **Chromatic ii-V's**. Sometimes they are included in a composition, but jazzers will sometimes add these into the harmony, or outline them in their improvisation.

Let's use a ii-V-I example. This is a common use of chromatic ii-V's but you can apply this to others when cycling in 4ths. Here's just a basic ii-V-I for starters.

A musical staff in G major (Clef: G, Key Signature: No sharps or flats) with a 4/4 time signature. It consists of three measures. The first measure contains a D minor 7th chord (D MIN<sup>7</sup>) with a stem pointing down, labeled 'ii' below it. The second measure contains a G 7th chord (G<sup>7</sup>) with a stem pointing up, labeled 'V' below it. The third measure contains a C major 7th chord (C MAJ<sup>7</sup>) with a stem pointing up, labeled 'I' below it. The staff has five horizontal lines and four spaces.

Now we are going to substitute the Dmin7 for a chromatic ii-V, and move the Dmin7 into bar 2.

A musical staff in G major (Clef: G, Key Signature: No sharps or flats) with a 4/4 time signature. It consists of five measures. The first measure contains an E flat minor 7th chord (E<sup>b</sup> MIN<sup>7</sup>) with a stem pointing down, labeled '#ii' below it. The second measure contains an A flat 7th chord (A<sup>b7</sup>) with a stem pointing up, labeled '#V' below it. The third measure contains a D minor 7th chord (D MIN<sup>7</sup>) with a stem pointing down, labeled 'ii' below it. The fourth measure contains a G 7th chord (G<sup>7</sup>) with a stem pointing up, labeled 'V' below it. The fifth measure contains a C major 7th chord (C MAJ<sup>7</sup>) with a stem pointing up, labeled 'I' below it. The staff has five horizontal lines and four spaces.

See what happened there? Essentially you are adding more chord changes to the progression and creating more harmonic movement to work with.

Let's try a lick using a chromatic ii-V into a ii-V-I.

## Exercise 44

A musical score in 4/4 time. The first measure shows a bass line with notes B, A, G, F, E. Above it, the chord is labeled E<sup>b</sup>MIN<sup>7</sup>. The second measure shows a bass line with notes A, G, F, E, D. Above it, the chord is labeled A⁹. The third measure shows a bass line with notes D, C, B, A, G. Above it, the chord is labeled DMIN<sup>7</sup>. The fourth measure shows a bass line with notes G, F, E, D, C. Above it, the chord is labeled G<sup>7</sup>. The fifth measure shows a bass line with notes C, B, A, G, F. Above it, the chord is labeled CMAJ<sup>7</sup>.

This idea uses a motif starting on the chromatic ii-V and then repeats the first three notes a half step down in bar 2.

Chromatic ii-V's are worth practicing and taking note of. This is a common tool that jazz musicians use time and time again in their improvisation.

## Tritone Substitution

An important technique that jazz musicians use to create harmonic movement is **tritone substitution**. I'm going to spend extra time talking about "tritone subs" because this is something you can use a lot in your jazz improvisation.

First things first, let's get some definitions out of the way.

### What's a tritone?

A tritone is an interval of three whole tones (tri) between two notes. You can also think of it as a #4 or b5 from a root note.

*Example: C-Gb*

Gb (or F#) is a tritone away from C and C is a tritone away from Gb.

Go to your instrument and identify some tritones. What is a tritone away from G? From Ab? From B? (Answers: Db, D, and F).

A great practice is to go through all 12 keys cycling through 4ths and identify every tritone interval. Remember, I talked about practicing in all 12 keys with the cycle of 4ths in the Scales chapter, so go back and review if you need to.

You want to be able to identify tritones on a whim, as well as any other intervals that exists.

When you understand what a tritone interval is, understanding a tritone substitution is fairly easy.

### What's a tritone substitution?

A tritone substitution occurs whenever a chord is being substituted or replaced by another chord with a root a tritone interval away.

*Example: G7 is replaced by Db7.*

In practice, a tritone sub in jazz is **most commonly a dominant 7 chord**. This doesn't mean you can't substitute other chord qualities, but a dominant 7 is most often the chord being used to replace. This has a lot to do with voice leading, which we will talk about more in Part 2 of this book.

So let's jump right into some different kinds of tritone substitutions.

## Tritone Sub of V

This is by far the **most common** tritone substitution, so pay close attention. This often occurs in a ii-V-I progression, and the V is being substituted by the adjacent tritone dominant.

A musical staff in G major (Clef: Treble, Key Signature: No sharps or flats) and 4/4 time. It shows a progression from a D minor 7th chord (D MIN⁷) to a D flat 7th chord (D♭⁷), which is labeled '(Tritone sub for G7)'. This is followed by a C major 7th chord (C MAJ⁷). The Roman numerals 'ii', 'Tri Sub of V', and 'I' are placed under their respective chords.

Notice that a tritone sub of V in the context of a ii-V-I has the root notes moving chromatically (D-Db-C).

Right off the bat, you can conclude that by substituting a Db7 for a G7, it implies that the G7 has altered qualities.

Let me explain. Look at the notes in a G7 and a Db7.

A comparison of the notes in a G7 chord and a Db7 chord. On the left, a G7 chord is shown with notes G, B, D, and G. On the right, a Db7 chord is shown with notes D, B-flat, F, and D. The notes are displayed on a single staff with a treble clef.

**G7:** G-B-D-F

**Db7:** Db-F-Ab-B

## What are the notes in Db7 related to G7?

Db is the #11 in G7.

F is the b7 in G7.

Ab is the b9 in G7.

B is the 3<sup>rd</sup> in G7.

It's important for you to note that the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> are present in both the tritone sub and the G7. This goes into voice leading which I have already promised to go into more detail in Part 2.

Otherwise, we have a #11 and a b9 which are both altered extensions. So the V chord, though being replaced by a tritone, will sound as if it's a G7alt.

You could go further with this by adding an extension to the Db7, such as the 9<sup>th</sup>. The 9<sup>th</sup> in Db7 is Eb7, and what is Eb7 in the context of G7? It's the flat 13.

### Exercise 45

The musical score consists of a single staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure shows a D minor 7th chord (D, F#, A, C) with a bass note D. The second measure shows a D dominant 7th chord (D, F#, A, C) with a bass note D. The third measure shows a C major 7th chord (C, E, G, B) with a bass note C. The score ends with a repeat sign and a blank measure.

## Tritone Sub of vi or VI

Slightly less common than the sub for V, but one you will come across from time to time is the tritone sub of the minor vi or dominant VI. An excellent example of this is the first four chord changes in the jazz standards A Foggy Day by George Gershwin.

A musical staff in G major (Clef: G, Key Signature: 1 sharp) with a 4/4 time signature. It shows four measures of chords: C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>, E<sup>b7</sup>, D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>, and G<sup>7</sup>. Below the staff, the Roman numerals I, Tri Sub of VI, ii, and V are written under their respective chords. A note above the E<sup>b7</sup> chord specifies '(Tritone sub for A7)'.

If you imagine that the A7 is the "V of ii," meaning that you pretend the ii chord is a minor i chord, you can draw the same conclusions about the note relationships of the Eb7 and the A7. It's the same concept. The Eb7 would imply an A7alt.

**For this next lick, I'm going to do something different.**

I'm going to combine the tritone sub of VI with the tritone sub of V. To demonstrate, the last three bars will be repeating the lick from Exercise 45. I think it will be helpful for you to see both of these in action together. I've circled the tritone subs just to be clear about the substitute chords.

### Exercise 46

A musical staff in G major (Clef: G, Key Signature: 1 sharp) with a 4/4 time signature. It shows five measures of chords: C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>, E<sup>b7</sup>, D<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup>, D<sup>b7</sup>, and C<sub>MAJ</sub><sup>7</sup>. The E<sup>b7</sup> and D<sup>b7</sup> chords are circled in blue to indicate they are tritone substitutes.

## Tritone Sub of ii

The last tritone sub that I want to cover is the tritone sub of ii. Often you will see this happen in a minor ii-V-i scenario, but it can also occur in a major ii-V-I.

A staff in G clef and 4/4 time. It shows three chords: A♭7, G7, and Cmin7. Below the staff, the progression is labeled "Tri Sub of ii - V - i". Above the first chord, there is a note A♭ with a small 7 above it, and the text "(Tritone sub for Dmin7b5)".

Now, the tritone sub of ii is often used in a minor blues situation. Because it lends itself so well to the blues, this last lick is going to be a short and sweet bluesy lick.

### Exercise 47

A staff in G clef and 4/4 time. It shows a bluesy lick consisting of eighth-note patterns over three chords: A♭7, G7ALT, and Cmin7. The lick ends with a fermata over the Cmin7 chord. The measure number 3 is indicated below the staff.

There are more possibilities with tritone substitution, but these are the main ones you will encounter. Study up on all of these, and you will have opened up a lot of different possibilities for your jazz improvisation.

We haven't had a Practice Challenge in a while, so let's do one now.

## PRACTICE CHALLENGE #10

Easier

- Pick one of the chord progressions we covered in this Chord Progressions chapter, and take the lick (Exercises 33-47) into all 12 keys. Two keys per day for six days. On the seventh day review all 12.

Challenging

- Pick three chord progressions we studied, and take the licks provided for each into all 12 keys. Same method as the easier option.

## Summing Up Part 1

Part 1 has been all about getting the necessary tools for jazz improvisation under your belt and learning how to use them. At the center of this half of the book has been the premise of the Jazz Improv Rule.

In Part 1 you learned about:

- » **Important scales for learning and navigating your instrument.** In the process, you learned about the importance of taking music through all 12 keys and practiced different exercises to apply to scales and modes.
- » **Triads and 7<sup>th</sup> Chords and how to construct them.** You also practiced exercises that had you connecting triads and 7<sup>th</sup> chord inversions together in the context of a chord progression.
- » **Chord extensions and alterations.** You learned how you can add on color tones to 7<sup>th</sup> chords, which will influence your note choices. You also learned how these chords are constructed.
- » **Scales and their relationship to chords.** You learned how scales can be used as pitch collections to help you discover note choices over different chords.
- » **Chord progressions.** You learned how they work, the most important ones to know, and how jazz musicians modify them.



## Developing Jazz Language

Part 1 was all about getting a strong musical foundation and setting you up for jazz improv success. Take all of that theory and technical stuff you just learned and file it away so you can reference it as you need.

Part 2 is all about **learning jazz language**. You will discover everything you need to know about learning jazz repertoire, developing a jazz vocabulary, and what it takes to become an expert improviser. This part of the book is all about creating actual music.

Are you ready? Let's dive in!

# CHAPTER 5

## Learning Jazz Standards

When it comes to playing jazz, learning jazz standards is pivotal for your jazz education.

One of my musical heroes is jazz guitarist Peter Bernstein. I took a lesson from him years ago and asked him what kinds of things he was practicing when he was a budding musician.

### **“I let the tunes teach me how to play.”**

By tunes, he meant jazz standards. He went on to elaborate that each jazz standard has something to teach us about improvising, musicianship, and even how to write our own music. He let the tunes teach him how to play.

**Jazz is a language.** Not “like” a language, this isn’t an analogy. It is a language. Music is a language, and like any language, to learn it you must read, write, speak, and listen to it.

We learned a lot about music theory in Part 1 and fundamentals of understanding jazz harmony. That was necessary. But at the end of the day playing **jazz is all about speaking.** It’s not something you should think about. It’s not something mathematical. Jazz is pure expression.

**Jazz standards are the vehicles in which jazz musicians use to improvise.** They are the common repertoire that jazz musicians use to communicate with each other. They are the fundamental context for how we communicate the language of jazz.

So is learning jazz standards necessary? You bet it is.

You can't walk into a jazz jam session and not know jazz standards. It would be tough to play a jazz gig with other jazz musicians if you don't know jazz standards. Sometimes the opportunity to play only original music presents itself, but even jazz musicians who write their own music have done their homework.

# What are jazz standards?

As the name suggest, jazz standards are compositions that have become “standard” or imperative to know. They are played and recognized by everybody, and therefore will be called on gigs and jam sessions.

Most jazz standards have stood the test of time, and therefore have been around for a while.

Jazz standards, in general, fall into two categories:

## 1. The Great American Song Book.

These are mostly popular American songs composed for musicals and film, spanning roughly the 1920's-1950. These are songs like “*My Shining Hour*,” and “*The Way You Look Tonight*.”

## 2. Jazz Originals.

These are songs written by jazz musicians for other jazz musicians. They became popular and embraced as standards. This is music written by artists like Wayne Shorter such as his composition “*Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum*,” or Miles Davis’ “*So What*”.

Between these two categories, there are thousands of jazz standards out there. Of course, some of them are more “standard” than others, which begs the question...

# Which jazz standards should you learn?

Ultimately, you should learn the jazz standards that you enjoy and that other musicians in your circle know. However, here’s a list of 50 jazz standards that I would say everyone should make a goal to learn. These are commonly called upon, no matter what city you live in and are helpful for your jazz education. Click on any of these song titles, and you’ll get to a page on [learnjazzstandards.com](http://learnjazzstandards.com) with resources for you to learn it.

## 50 JAZZ STANDARDS YOU NEED TO KNOW

All of Me	Have You Met Miss Jones	On Green Dolphin Street
All The Things You Are	How High The Moon	Recorda Me
Alone Together	I Hear a Rhapsody	Satin Doll
Autumn Leaves	I Love You	Stella By Starlight
Billie's Bounce	I Remember You	Scapple From The Apple
Black Orpheus	I'll Remember April	So What
Blue Bossa	I'm Old Fashioned	Solar
Body and Soul	If I Should Lose You	St. Thomas
But Not For Me	If I Were A Bell	Sweet Georgia Brown
Bye Bye Blackbird	In A Mellow Tone	Take The A Train
Cherokee	In A Sentimental Mood	The Girl From Ipanema
Confirmation	It Could Happen To You	There Is No Greater Love
Days of Wine and Roses	Just Friends	There Will Never Be Another You
Doxy	Misty	Up Jumped Spring
Fly Me To The Moon	My Funny Valentine	What Is This Thing Called Love
Footprints	Night and Day	Yesterdays
Four	Oleo	

I would suggest printing this page and crossing out the ones you already know, or as you learn them. This is a great goal to make for yourself. I find it motivating when I have things listed out, and can see the progress I am making.

Each of these standards has so much to teach you about jazz and music, so this should keep you busy for a while!

This may still be an overwhelming list for you. So I think it's worth spending some more time providing you another list to work off of.

If you are more of a beginner jazz player, I would recommend these 20 easier ones to work with. These all tend to have easier harmonic movement and simpler melodies for the most part.

If you're not a beginner, but don't know all of these standards, I would highly suggest making sure you know them all.

## 20 JAZZ STANDARDS FOR BEGINNERS

All Blues	Fly Me to the Moon	Summertime
Autumn Leaves	Mack the Knife	There Is No Greater Love
Blue Bossa	Lester Leaps In	Watermelon Man
Bag's Groove	Mr. P.C.	Work Song
C-Jam Blues	My Little Suede Shoes	What Is This Thing Called Love
Cold Duck Time	Song for My Father	
Doxy	St. Thomas	

Again, if you click on any of these standards and have an internet connection, you will be provided with a variety of different resources to help you learn these jazz standards.

# How to Learn Jazz Standards

When it comes to learning jazz standards, there isn't a wrong or right way. But there is the easy way and the **better way**.

The easy way is just buy some sheet music, read the melody and chords off the page, memorize (or sometimes not) and call it good. That's certainly the instant gratification way, but I guarantee you that's not the best way to learn jazz standards or any piece of music.

Remember that jazz is a language. One of the most important parts of learning a language is **mimicking**. You hear something, and copy it.

Jazz is not a music that is meant to be learned from sheet music. It never was. Back in the bebop days in the 1940's, jazz musicians would pile into clubs and listen to each other play. They would literally pick things up on the bandstand, in rehearsals, and by just listening to records.

That doesn't mean they couldn't read music, or never read music, but learning music **by ear** was always the primary method. That's something I want you to understand. **Jazz is first and foremost an aurally learned music**. So if you want to become a great jazz improviser, you need to follow in the footsteps of the great jazz musicians before you.

Learning music by ear is not always the easy way, and if you aren't used to it, you may find it quite difficult at first. But it's the best way hands down, and the more you do it, the easier it gets.

I'm going to share with you how I learn jazz standards. It's not just me, though. This is the advice of many world-class jazz musicians I have had the privilege to be mentored by. So know that this information is big-time legitimate stuff.

# Steps to Learning Jazz Standards

## 1. Listen to the jazz standard (no instrument involved).

The first step is picking a tune you want to learn and just listening to it. This doesn't sound like rocket science, but it's the most important part. And I don't mean listen to it once. Listen to it over and over again.

Listen to multiple versions of the standard. This will give you better perspective and understanding of the composition. Check out old and new recordings. Check out different instrumentalists, and if pertinent, definitely listen to a vocalist version.

Make sure you know how that jazz standard goes forwards and backward.

## 2. Learn the melody by ear.

This one requires two steps. Remember, there is no sheet music involved!

- » *Be able to sing the melody along with the recording.* If you can sing it, you can play it. Or at least that means you have those sounds engrained in your ear. You haven't touched your instrument yet unless you're a vocalist.
- » *Learn the melody on your instrument.* Translate what you already know through singing, to your instrument. This is the moment where you pick up your instrument and start playing!

### Tips for learning the melody:

Some artists are better for learning the melody of a tune than others. For example, Billie Holiday and Miles Davis tend to take a lot of liberties with the melody, and therefore aren't ideal for learning authentic melodies.

When in doubt, **Frank Sinatra** is your friend. Sinatra always sings the melodies completely straight, so use him whenever you can!

### **3. Learn the harmony by ear.**

This is usually tougher than learning the melody by ear. But don't go straight to your real book!

The key is to first listen to the bass player. Listen hard and try to identify the root notes on your instrument. Then you can fill in the blanks with what quality the chords are. If you've been following along in the book from the beginning, you should already have a good idea of how different chords and chord progressions sound.

**Note:** it's not shameful to check your work with some sheet music after you've put in the work.

### **4. Put it all together.**

Get out your metronome or even a play-along, and start practicing. If you are a chordal instrument such as a piano or guitar, try comping through the song. If you are a horn player, try playing the arpeggios of the chords. Just practice and play.

### **5. Get together with another musician and jam.**

This is the whole reason we learn tunes. You are putting the music into practice. The real education happens when you play with other musicians. Always remember that. If you want to know a tune well, play it often with other musicians.

Learning jazz standards is extremely important. If you want to become a great jazz improviser, you need to be learning the music.

I want to repeat one last time the words that Peter Bernstein said to me.

**"I let the tunes teach me how to play."**

Such simple but important words.

Let the tunes teach you how to play. They have all of the harmonic and rhythmic information you need to play jazz. The more jazz standards you learn, the more competent you will be as a jazz improviser.

# CHAPTER 6

## Important Jazz Song Forms

Before we go over some specific techniques for playing jazz language, I think it's appropriate to identify **two very important** song forms in jazz music.

These two song forms show up time and time again in jazz and therefore are worth giving some extra attention. It's important that you have a clear understanding of these and spend some extra time working on them.

What are the song forms I'm referring to? **The Blues and Rhythm Changes.**

The blues is saturated in jazz music. Essentially, the blues gave birth to jazz music.

Rhythm changes is the product of George Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm," but those chord changes were adopted by beboppers such as saxophonist Charlie Parker. Parker wrote a lot of songs that utilized those changes, and he had a profound effect on how jazz is even played today.

I want you to understand these song forms very well. These will come up often in your jazz studies. Lots of jazz standards are written in these styles.

In addition, these two song forms contain a lot of the harmonic movement that you will see in many jazz standards.

Let's dive in!

# The Blues

The blues was born out of the African slave trade in the United States. It came straight out of the oppression of the working fields, where the slaves combined African music traditions, spirituals, and African-American work songs. Often there was a “call and response” element and no strict form.

The blues evolved, of course, and when early jazz was coming to fruition in the diverse port city of New Orleans, the blues was one of the key ingredients.

The blues has taken on many forms over different genres and time periods. When it comes to jazz, the blues is essential to study, not only because it's so influential in jazz, but because it's a study in jazz harmony itself.

The blues is most commonly a **12 bar form**, though you can find tunes with different variations.

The two most important that you need to know as a jazz musician is what I call the **Basic I7-IV7-V Blues**, and the **Basic Jazz Blues**.

One thing to note is that when it comes to understanding the chords by numbers, the diatonic series does not always represent the same quality you would see from the Major Diatonic Series. For example, the **I chord is a dominant chord as well as the IV chord**.

A musical staff in G clef and common time (indicated by a '4'). The staff shows two measures. The first measure contains a C7 chord, indicated by the label 'I7' below the staff. The second measure contains an F7 chord, indicated by the label 'IV7' below the staff. The staff consists of five vertical lines representing strings, with horizontal strokes indicating the notes played on each string.

Let's go over these important blues forms, starting with the Basic I7-IV7-V7. These will be in Concert Bb as this is a popular key to play the blues in jazz. Click on the example to hear what it sounds like.

## Basic I7-IV7-V7 Blues

The musical score illustrates a 12-bar blues progression. The chords are indicated below each staff:

- Top Staff: C<sup>7</sup>, I7, IV7, I7, C<sup>7</sup>
- Middle Staff: F<sup>7</sup>, IV7, I7
- Bottom Staff: G<sup>7</sup>, V, IV7, I7, V

This blues form is a basic 12 bar blues, utilizing only three chords: the I7, IV7, and the V chord.

Take some time to memorize this chord progression, because this is important to know!

If you play a chordal instrument such as piano or guitar, be sure you can comp through this and play all of the chords. If you are a horn player or other instrumentalist, be able to play the arpeggios.

Now let's go over the Basic Jazz Blues. Jazz musicians have taken the Basic I7-IV7-V Blues and added more chord changes and variations to it. Many jazz blues standards are written with these changes.

# Basic Jazz Blues

The musical score shows three staves of eighth-note patterns. The first staff starts with  $C^7$ , followed by  $I7$ ,  $IV7$ , and another  $I7$ . The second staff starts with  $F^7$ , followed by  $C^7$ , and  $A^7$ . The third staff starts with  $D\text{min}7$ , followed by  $G7$ ,  $C^7$ ,  $(D\text{min}7)$ , and  $G7$ . Roman numerals below the notes indicate the chords: I, IV, V, I, II, V, I, II, V.

The differences in the chord changes start in bar 8. Instead of going to the V chord in bar 9, they play a ii-V into the I7 chord in bar 11. To bridge the gap from the Bb7 in bar 7, the dominant VI chord is added in bar 8.

You may have noticed the chord in parenthesis in the Basic I7-IV-V Blues, and now you see it again in the Basic Jazz Blues (Cmin7-F7).

This is what we call a **turnaround**. The blues is a short form that is repeated many times throughout the duration of a song. To get from the end back to the beginning, you can add a turnaround such as a ii-V to get back to the top.

Now, jazz musicians get bored easily. They like to add even more changes into the blues. We've already covered a bunch of different kinds of chord substitutions in the Chord Progressions chapter, and those are certainly all game. But there are certain additions to the blues in particular that jazz musicians like to use.

# Common Jazz Blues Additions

The musical score consists of three staves of music in common time (indicated by '4'). The first staff starts with a C7 chord, followed by an F7 chord, another C7 chord, a G<sub>MIN</sub><sup>7</sup> chord (circled in blue), and a final C7 chord. The second staff starts with an IV7 chord, followed by a #iv dim chord (circled in blue), an I7 chord, an iii chord, and a VI chord. The third staff starts with a ii chord, followed by a V chord, an I7 chord, a VI chord, an ii chord, and a V chord. The circled chords represent common jazz blues additions.

In bar 4, a **ii-V of IV7** is added, meaning that you can perceive the Fmin7-Bb7 as a ii-V- into Eb7. This just makes it easier to think about rather than relating these chords to the parent key center of Bb.

In bar 6, the **#iv diminished** is added. You'll recognize this if you followed along with the chord substitutions section in the Chord Progressions chapter.

In bar 8, the **iii chord** is added with the VI. This just adds some nice voice leading into the ii chord.

The turnaround at the end now has a VI chord added in bar 11. Essentially, bars 11 and 12 are a I-VI-ii-V chord progression.

## Bird Blues

There is one more kind of jazz blues you should know about. It's called a **Bird Blues**.

Bird refers to Charlie Parker, the iconic saxophonist who pioneered Bebop. If you don't know who he is, be sure to look him up! His nickname was "Bird", hence Bird blues, and he took the 12 bar blues and re-harmonized it to make his own version of the blues. A good example is [Blues for Alice](#).

His version of the blues is straight out of the bebop tradition. There are lots of chord changes and re-harmonized chords. On the next page, you'll see a Bird Blues and I will circle the important blues chords so that you can see where he got them from.

The image displays three staves of musical notation, likely for a jazz band, illustrating harmonic progressions. The first staff shows a progression starting with **Cmaj7** (circled in blue), followed by **B<sub>min</sub>7(b5)**, **E<sup>7</sup>**, **A<sub>min</sub>7**, **G<sub>min</sub>7**, and **C<sup>7</sup>**. The labels below the staff indicate the function of each chord: **I**, **ii-V of vi**, **vi**, and **ii-V of IV7**. The second staff shows a progression starting with **F<sup>7</sup>** (circled in blue), followed by **F<sub>min</sub>7**, **B<sup>b7</sup>**, **E<sub>min</sub>7**, **A<sup>7</sup>**, **E<sup>b</sup><sub>min</sub>7**, and **A<sup>b7</sup>**. The label **IV7** is below the staff, and the text **Cycling chromatic ii-V's to the ii** is centered above the staff. The third staff shows a progression starting with **D<sub>min</sub>7**, followed by **G<sup>7</sup>** (circled in blue), **C<sub>maj</sub>7**, **(A7**, **D<sub>min</sub>7**, **G<sup>7</sup>)**. The labels below the staff indicate the function of each chord: **ii**, **V**, **I**, **VI**, **ii**, and **V**.

Circled is the I, IV7 and the V chord. Those are the important chords that were present in the Basic I7-IV7-V Blues, although Parker changed the I7 chord into a major I chord. Charlie Parker added all of the changes in between to lead to those chords.

We call these chords **target chords**. They are being targeted by a series of other progressions that eventually resolve to them.

The **ii-V of vi** is a detour that leads into the ii-V of IV7.

The series of **cycling chromatic ii-V's** leads into the ii (Cmin7) which leads into the V (F7).

## POPULAR JAZZ BLUES STANDARDS

To continue on with our theme of providing lists of songs to learn, here are some jazz blues tunes worth learning. Click on any of them to get more resources.

All Blues	Chi Chi	Sandu
Au Privave	Cool Blues	Sonnymoon For Two
Bag's Groove	Equinox	Straight No Chaser
Billie's Bounce	Footprints	Take The Coltrane
Birk's Works	Freddie Freeloader	Tenor Madness
Blue Monk	Freight Trane	Things Ain't What They Used To Be
Blues for Alice	Mr. P.C	Watermelon Man
Blues In The Closet	Now's The Time	West Coast Blues
C-Jam Blues	Relaxin' At Camarillo	
Cheryl	Route 66	

## → PRACTICE CHALLENGE #10

### Easier

- The most common keys for a jazz blues to be played in is C, F, Bb, G, and Eb. Pick one of the jazz blues songs listed above, learn it from a recording (see the link) and take it into those 5 keys.

Note: I know this may already be challenging, but you've got this!

### Challenging

- Do the same as the "Easier" challenge, but take it into all 12 keys.

# Rhythm Changes

As I've already mentioned, rhythm changes comes from George Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm".

Charlie Parker and the beboppers adopted the chord changes from I Got Rhythm and wrote many different songs using them. Because the song form became so widely used, it is now an essential study for jazz musicians.

Similarly to the blues, it is also a great study of jazz harmony. The song form uses many important chord progressions such as the I-VI-ii-V. The bridge is a great example of dominant 7 chords cycling in 4ths.

It is also a good example of a song in **AABA** form.

## What is AABA form?

In jazz (and other styles of music), A's and B's are sometimes used to break up and organize a song. This allows the musicians playing it to understand the structure of the form and if any sections are repeated.

AABA is a common form found in jazz.

If AABA form doesn't make 100% sense to you yet, hopefully the next few pages will clarify things.

I will demonstrate a lead sheet of rhythm changes, and the following page will show you the chords by number.

CMAJ<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>  
A MIN<sup>7</sup> D MIN<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> E MIN<sup>7</sup>  
CMAJ<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>  
A MIN<sup>7</sup> D MIN<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

A

C<sup>7</sup> F<sup>7</sup> F<sup>#</sup>DIM<sup>7</sup> CMAJ<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> DMIN<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

CMAJ<sup>7</sup> A MIN<sup>7</sup> D MIN<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> CMAJ<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> DMIN<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

A

C<sup>7</sup> F<sup>7</sup> F<sup>#</sup>DIM<sup>7</sup> DMIN<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> CMAJ<sup>7</sup>

E<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>

B

D<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

CMAJ<sup>7</sup> A MIN<sup>7</sup> D MIN<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> CMAJ<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> DMIN<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

A

C<sup>7</sup> F<sup>7</sup> F<sup>#</sup>DIM<sup>7</sup> DMIN<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> CMAJ<sup>7</sup>

CMAJ<sup>7</sup>

I vi/VI ii V I/iii VI ii V

I IV7 #ivdim I vi/VI ii V

I vi/VI ii V I/iii VI ii V

I IV7 #ivdim ii V I

III7 VI

II7 V

I vi/VI ii V I/iii VI ii V

I IV7 #ivdim ii V I

When you see a chord stacked on top of another, it simply means there is more than one choice. You may notice that for the vi chord I give the option of either the dominant VI or the minor vi. Both are commonly used.

Pay attention to the cycling dominant chords in measures 17-24. If you look at the chords by number analysis, you'll see the III chord is made dominant, and the II chord is made dominant as well.

Rhythm changes is a song form you should memorize. I would spend plenty of time working on songs that use these changes and understanding how the harmony works.

## POPULAR RHYTHM CHANGES STANDARDS

Of course, I'm leaving you with a list of rhythm changes tunes to learn! This time around, I'll keep it short.

I Got Rhythm

Rhythm-A-Ning

Dexterity

Steeplechase

Lester Leaps In

Moose The Mooche

Anthropology

Oleo

## PRACTICE CHALLENGE #12

Easier

- The most common key for rhythm changes is almost always concert Bb. However, this doesn't mean taking it into other keys isn't a great practice. Pick one standard listed above and learn it in 3 keys of your choice.
- This is still a tough challenge, but feel free to adjust the intensity to your skill level, even if that means just learning the rhythm changes standard.

Challenging

- You knew this was coming! Take the rhythm changes standard you learn into all 12 keys.

# C H A P T E R

7

## Developing Jazz Language

So far in Part 2 of this book I've talked a lot about what you should be learning. This has all been very necessary, because at the end of the day, these jazz standards are going to provide the environment for you to improvise.

But now I want to talk about actually **developing jazz language**. Part 1 had you learning how to navigate your instrument and learn the necessary tools for improvisation. But you may be wondering, "*How do I make all of this start to sound like jazz?*"

There are two sides to developing jazz language we are going to talk about in this chapter: **mimicking and conceptualizing**.

We've already talked about how jazz is a language in every sense of the word. So I will explain these to you in those terms.

*Mimicking* is simply hearing jazz being spoken, copying it and using it in your own vocabulary.

*Conceptualizing* is analyzing jazz language and figuring out how it works. It's the grammar.

So let's dive in. First we'll talk about mimicking, which I'm going to use in a slightly more provocative term...

# Stealing Jazz Language

When it comes to jazz, if you aren't somewhat of a thief you're missing out on the goods. And I know this may sound like peer pressure, but everyone's doing it so you might as well join in!

Don't worry, stealing in jazz is a good thing. In fact, it's not a negative thing at all. For example, have you ever used someone else's argument or idea in one of your own conversations? Of course you have! You probably said it a slightly different way, but more or less, you "stole" the idea from someone else.

**If you truly want to learn the jazz language, you need to be learning musical ideas from the masters that came before you.**

This is not my original idea. Think about Sonny Stitt for example. His playing is very much in the style of Charlie Parker. What do you think he was doing? He was ripping off Charlie Parker lines and shedding his stuff!

Eventually he developed his own sound because no one can truly sound exactly like someone else. But at the end of the day, you can hear the tradition that Sonny Stitt was coming out of.

Here are the things you should be stealing:

- » **Small licks and phrases from your favorite jazz musicians.**
- » **Entire solos of your favorite jazz musicians.**
- » **Tone, attack, intonation, and phrasing.**

You need to figure this stuff out, and the best way to do that is to mimic the way successful jazz musicians speak.

# How to Learn Jazz Language

So now you know what to do, the question is *how do you do it?* Do you remember how I told you to learn jazz standards? The exact same way.

Just to review in case it's been a while, or if you skipped that section of the book, the best way to learn jazz language (or standards) is **by ear**.

When you learn musical information by ear, you memorize it better and improve your ear. Your ear is your most valuable asset as a jazz improviser, so you want to exercise it.

Let's go over some steps for learning jazz language. You can apply both of these to either learning an entire solo or just a lick.

## 1. Pick a solo or lick you like.

Don't underestimate this step! I've tried learning solos that teachers or other musicians have suggested to me, but wasn't very excited to learn them. The result was that I **didn't finish them, or I slogged through them and didn't get much out of it in the end**.

This is especially an important thing to consider with learning solos. Learning an entire solo, or even part of a solo can be a time-consuming endeavor. So make sure that you are working on something you truly want to learn. If you are excited about the solo you are learning, it can make a world of difference.

## 2. Listen to the solo or lick until you can sing along.

This is a step that many skip, but it can be helpful if you stick to it. It's tempting to rush into figuring out a piece of musical information on your instrument without truly knowing it first. It's my belief that if you can sing along with it (*i.e. you have memorized the melody by ear*), translating it to your instrument becomes much easier.

Think about it: you aren't worried about what the solo or lick sounds like, so therefore you've won half the battle! This will help you internalize the music (*which is the ultimate end goal*) and your instrument is simply a voice used to express what you are hearing.

### **3. Learn one short phrase at a time.**

Obviously, if you are just learning a lick, you only need to learn one phrase! **The idea here is you are finally taking what you already can sing and translating it to your instrument.**

Don't bite off more than you can chew. Identify the first phrase in the solo; a place where it would be appropriate to cut off. While listening to the recording, learn the phrase one note at a time if you have to. If it's a quick passage, you may want to use a slow-downer software to hear the notes.

### **4. Repeat each phrase (or lick) you learn along with the recording.**

This is key for three reasons:

- » **Memorization.** You need to get the passage under your fingers and repetition is the best way to do that.
- » **Accuracy.** Playing along with the recording holds you accountable to playing exactly what the soloist played. It's easy to accidentally create your own version of the line, with slight rhythmic or even note variations if you aren't checking back with the recording.
- » **Authenticity.** The idea is to try to get inside the feeling and the phrasing of the soloist, not just simply learn the notes. Playing along with the recording helps you mimic the soloist's execution of the phrases.

## **5. Repeat whole sections along with the recording.**

This applies more for learning solos than licks.

Basically, you are continually repeating bigger and bigger sections. You learn one phrase, you repeat until you memorize it. You learn the next phrase, you repeat it until you memorize it. **Then** you practice the first two phrases together along with the recording... etc.

Eventually you'll have learned the first 32 bars or so of the solo, and you'll practice just those 32 bars altogether before moving on. What this ends up looking like is repeating parts of the solo, scores if not hundreds of time. Sound like a lot of work? It is. But the reward is great!

## **6. After you've completed the lick or solo, review it for a period of time.**

How long you review it isn't important. The idea is that you are keeping it fresh on your fingers and your memory for a while. **The idea isn't that you can play the solo verbatim at a gig or jam session, it's so that it has the chance to sink into your subconscious.** Soon some of the feeling, ideas, and language will come out in your playing one way or the other.

## → PRACTICE CHALLENGE #13

Easier

- Make a list of jazz artists you like. Pick one. Pick a solo you really enjoy from that artist. Find one lick you like in the solo and learn it using the steps provided above.

Challenging

- Do the same as the “Easier” option, but instead you are going to learn at least 2 choruses of the solo you pick. The whole one may be ideal. Make sure the solo is accessible for your skill level.

OR

Take the lick you learned and bring it through all 12 keys.

## Guide Tones and Voice Leading: The Power Duo

Let’s start getting down to the nitty-gritty.

I’ve already told you how important it is for you to be learning jazz language by ear from the masters. Great. You can copy those guys and get a lot of mileage out of that, but we also need to **conceptualize** jazz language.

Our first stop to conceptualizing jazz language is **guide tones**. Guide tones are essential if you want to hear the chord changes come out in your solos.

### What is a guide tone?

Guide tones are notes within a chord structure that both help define a chord, and can be used to transition to another chord melodically.

**The most common guide tones are the 3rds and 7ths.**

These two notes are your best friends when it comes to jazz improvisation. Why? Let's review quickly the formulas to all of our 7<sup>th</sup> chords which we covered in the Chords chapter.

## **7th chord formulas:**

**Major 7:** Root-3rd-5th-7th

**Dominant 7:** Root-3rd-5th-b7

**Minor 7:** Root-b3-5th-b7

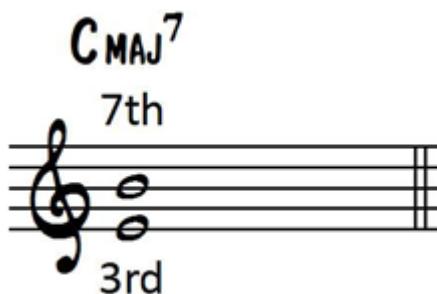
**Half diminished:** Root-b3-b5-b7

**Diminished 7:** Root-b3-b5-bb7

Now look through them and identify which notes are changing chord to chord. **It's the 3rds and 7ths.** The only exception would be the b5 in the half diminished and diminished 7, which would make the b5 a possible guide tone as well.

The 3rds and 7ths define whether a chord is major, minor, or dominant. In jazz harmony this is incredibly important. So do you think using the 3rds in 7ths in your musical lines is going to be important? You bet it is.

Let's take a look at the 3rds and 7ths guide tones over a Cmaj7 to get started.



The 3<sup>rd</sup> is E and the 7<sup>th</sup> is B. Fairly simple stuff if you've been following along from the beginning with the Scales and Chords chapters. These are your guide tones for a Cmaj7 chord.

Now let's take things up to the next level and introduce a ii-V-I chord progression. We'll stay in the key of C and use the chords **Dmin7-G7-Cmaj7**.

**Dmin7 guide tones:** F and C

**G7 guide tones:** F and B

**Cmaj7 guide tones:** E and B

Now I want you to pay close attention to something very important.

**Did you notice how I started the Dmin7 with the 3<sup>rd</sup> in the bass, but then when we moved to the G7 the 7<sup>th</sup> was in the bass?**

The reason I did this is to demonstrate good **voice leading**. If you've been following along in the book, you will have heard this term before, and I've promised to explain it in more detail. Time to fulfill the promise!

### What is voice leading?

Voice leading is the smooth melodic movement of notes (or voices) from one chord to the next.

The reason I put the 7<sup>th</sup> of the G7 in the bass is because the F was already there. Also, see how the 7<sup>th</sup> of Dmin7 (C) moves in an easy step wise motion into the 3<sup>rd</sup> of G7 (B)?

The key term there was **step wise motion**.

Take a look at how these voices move.

DMIN7                    G7                    CMAJ7  
7th                            3rd                            7th  
3rd    3rd

While the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> remain the same note from the Dmin7 to the G7, the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> move a half step down.

While the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> remain the same note from the G7 to the Cmaj7, the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> move a half step down. Noticing a pattern here?

#### The 3rds and 7ths ii-V-I Rule:

When chords are cycling in 4ths (such as in the case of a ii-V-I):

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> of a minor 7 will always be the 7<sup>th</sup> of the proceeding dominant 7 chord

*Ex.*

**Dmin7: 3<sup>rd</sup>=F**

**G7: 7<sup>th</sup>=F**

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> of a dominant 7 will always be the 7<sup>th</sup> of the proceeding major 7 chord.

*Ex.*

**G7: 3<sup>rd</sup>=B**

**Cmaj7: 7<sup>th</sup>=B**

That's pretty interesting, right? Now if you venture outside of those patterns, different rules come to light. But let's just focus on the ii-V-I.

Of course, this means we have one more rule to discuss.

### The 3rds and 7ths Half Step Rule:

- When chords are cycling in 4ths, the 7<sup>th</sup> of a minor 7 chord will always resolve to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of a dominant 7 chord by a half step.

*Ex.*

**Dmin7: 7th= C**

**G7: 3rd= B**

- The 7<sup>th</sup> of a dominant 7 chord will always resolve to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of a major 7 chord by a half step.

*Ex.*

**G7: 7th= F**

**Cmaj7: 3rd= E**

There are other rules, such as the 3<sup>rd</sup> of a dominant resolving to the 7<sup>th</sup> of a minor by a half step. Many chords don't have guide tones resolving by half steps, such as a minor 7 to a minor 7. But again, I think it's best to focus on this scenario for now.

So that you can visualize this better, let's make the guide tones to this ii-V-I melodic rather than chordal.

A musical staff in G major (one sharp) and common time (indicated by '4'). The staff shows six notes corresponding to the notes D, G, and C from left to right. Below each note is its label and its function in the progression: D is labeled 'D MIN 7' and '3rd'; G is labeled 'G 7' and '7th'; C is labeled 'C MAJ 7' and '3rd'. The notes are positioned such that the 3rd of one chord becomes the 7th of the next, illustrating the half-step resolution rule.

Try playing through this. It's simple, but you can hear the chord changes right? That's how powerful the combination of guide tone and voice leading can be. Without having any chords played, you can hear the harmonic movement.

Let's take this to the next level. You may be thinking, "*this is great, but this doesn't sound like music.*" And you'd be right. Simply voice leading the guide tones isn't going to have you playing incredible jazz solos.

We have to connect the dots with a melody. It's been a while since you've had a proper exercise lick to play, so here's a good one to get you going again.

## Exercise 48

D MIN<sup>7</sup>                    G<sup>7</sup>                    C MAJ<sup>7</sup>

I had two goals when writing this exercise: **1. Keep it diatonic** (no chromaticism, that's coming up in the next section), **2. Connect the 7ths to 3rds in a half step motion.**

Let's take a look at this lick a little closer.

D MIN<sup>7</sup>                    G<sup>7</sup>                    C MAJ<sup>7</sup>

3rd                            7th    3rd                    7th    3rd                    7th

See how the notes connect?

Now I want to be thorough for you. You may wonder how I came up with the notes in between the 3rds and 7ths. The answer: **chord tones and pitch collections.**

If you've been following along in the book from the beginning, you'll remember the chord tone exercises we did in the Chords chapter. You'll also remember when I talked about scales as pitch collections. They aren't musical by themselves, but when thought of as pitch collections, we can use them to draw note choices from. We also talked about chord/scale theory in the Chords chapter.

So if you study Exercise 48, you'll see that I am mixing in step-wise motion with chord tone leaps.

The other influencer in my note choices is **direction**.

For demonstration sake, I started the lick out on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Dmin7, and started moving my line higher in pitch until I reached the 7<sup>th</sup>, which I know resolves down to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of G7. The G7, though it moves both up and down in pitch, has a general direction heading down to the 7<sup>th</sup> which resolves down to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Cmaj7. I chose for the Cmaj7 line to move up in pitch towards the 7<sup>th</sup>.

A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. It shows a lick starting on the 3rd of Dmin7, moving up to the 7th, then down to the 3rd of G7, down to the 7th, and finally up to the 3rd of Cmaj7. Blue arrows above the staff indicate the direction of movement: up from the 3rd to the 7th, down from the 7th to the 3rd, and up from the 3rd to the 7th. Blue circles highlight the 3rd and 7th notes at each chord change.

Obviously, there are many different ways to approach this. These are just my note and directional choices.

Now let's take this to a larger scale. **We are going to apply our knowledge of guide tones and voice leading to a jazz standard.** Remember, the jazz standards have a lot to teach us harmonically, so what could be more appropriate?

Let's apply this to Jerome Kern's [All the Things You Are](#). Admittedly, this isn't the easiest of standards out there. But it's a fantastic study of chords cycling in 4ths, which as we know, lends itself well to guide tone voice leading.

### Exercise 49 (next page)

F MIN<sup>7</sup>      B<sup>b</sup> MIN<sup>7</sup>      E<sup>b</sup>      A<sup>b</sup> MAJ<sup>7</sup>

Isn't it phenomenal? You can hear the chord changes without playing chords at all. I don't know about you, but this gets me excited! Think of the possibilities if we can all learn how to voice lead with guide tones better.

Now, of course I'm not going to leave it there. As we have done with the ii-V-I, let's connect the dots with some melodic lines.

Here's the rules I am using for this next exercise:

- » **Only diatonic notes.** There won't be chromaticism as that stuff is coming up next.
- » **Chord will be connected by guide tones, voice lead by either half steps or whole steps.**
- » **Mostly eighth notes.**
- » **A contained range, so that most instruments can play it.**

That's a lot of rules to abide by, and certainly it will limit the musical potential of the melodic lines. But that's okay! Sometimes putting up stipulations for your playing can help you exercise muscles that are weak.

Remember, this exercise has you intentionally playing run-on sentence eighth note lines. **This is not necessarily how you should play in a musical situation.** But by forcing yourself to do this, you are challenging yourself to connect these chords in creative ways.

I have the 3rds and 7ths underlined to help you see the guide tones and how they are connected.

## Exercise 50 (next page)

**F MIN<sup>7</sup>**      **B<sup>b</sup> MIN<sup>7</sup>**      **E<sup>b</sup>7**      **A<sup>b</sup> MAJ<sup>7</sup>**  

  
**D<sup>b</sup> MAJ<sup>7</sup>**      **G<sup>7</sup>**      **C MAJ<sup>7</sup>**  

  
**C MIN<sup>7</sup>**      **F MIN<sup>7</sup>**      **B<sup>b</sup>7**      **E<sup>b</sup> MAJ<sup>7</sup>**  

  
**A<sup>b</sup> MAJ<sup>7</sup>**      **D<sup>7</sup>**      **G MAJ<sup>7</sup>**  

  
**A MIN<sup>7</sup>**      **D<sup>7</sup>**      **G MAJ<sup>7</sup>**  

  
**F<sup>#</sup> MIN<sup>7</sup>**      **B<sup>7</sup>**      **E MAJ<sup>7</sup>**      **C<sup>7</sup>**  

  
**F MIN<sup>7</sup>**      **B<sup>b</sup> MIN<sup>7</sup>**      **E<sup>b</sup>7**      **A<sup>b</sup> MAJ<sup>7</sup>**  

  
**D<sup>b</sup> MAJ<sup>7</sup>**      **D<sup>b</sup> MIN<sup>7</sup>**      **C MIN<sup>7</sup>**      **B DIM<sup>7</sup>**  

  
**B<sup>b</sup> MIN<sup>7</sup>**      **E<sup>b</sup>7**      **A<sup>b</sup> MAJ<sup>7</sup>**  


It's important to mention that not all voice leading needs to use guide tones. You can voice lead other chord tones to create melodies, but know that guide tones are the defining notes of a chord.

Guide tones and voice leading are a powerful duo. I encourage you to explore these tools further and start putting them into practice. If you do, you will be surprised at how your jazz language will start to develop.

## → PRACTICE CHALLENGE #14

### Easier

- Pick a jazz standard you know and identify the guide tones. Use voice leading techniques to connect them together. Use previous examples and exercises as a frame of reference. Be able to play through the song with a metronome.

### Challenging

- Take the "Easier" challenge a step further by composing a solo similar to Exercise 50. Set limitations for yourself and connect the dots between the guide tones.

# Enclosure and the Use of Approach Tones

In the last section I was being very strict with the examples and exercises. I was keeping them diatonic, being sure not to go astray with notes outside of the key.

But one defining characteristic about jazz language is the use of chromaticism. Jazz musicians are constantly using notes outside of the diatonic key center to connect their lines.

So if guide tones and voice leading taught you how to bring the chord changes out in your playing, this next topic expands upon this.

A great way to conceptualize the way jazz musicians approach guide tones and other chord tones is through **enclosure**.

## What is enclosure?

Enclosure is the process of approaching a target note from above and below either diatonically or chromatically.

To understand this, it is important to understand what a **target note** is. It's not rocket science, but it's worth a dignified definition.

## What is a target note?

A target note is a note that is being resolved to by a series of approach tones.

There I did it again. Another term included in a definition that also needs defining itself. You also need to understand what **approach tones** are.

## What are approach tones?

Approach tones are the notes being used to resolve to a target note. There are two kinds:

### **Diatonic approach:**

A note approaching the target tone that is related to the given key center. For example, a B approaching a C in the key center of C major is diatonic.

### **Chromatic approach:**

A note approaching the target tone that is not related to the given key center. For example, a C# approaching a C in the key center of C major, is chromatic.

To make proper sense of all of this, let's go over some examples.

The image shows musical notation for a C major 7 chord. At the top, it says "C MAJ 7". Below that is a treble clef followed by a "4" indicating common time. A vertical bar line separates the first measure from the second. The first measure contains two eighth notes: a D followed by a B. The second measure contains one quarter note at the beginning of a repeat sign, followed by a dash indicating a continuation.

In this particular case the target note is the **root (C)**, and it is being approached by a **whole step above (D)**, and a **half step below (B)**.

Both of them are diatonic approach tones.

Do you see where the term enclosure comes from now? Essentially the target note is being “enclosed” by the D and the B.

Let's go over another example of enclosure. The last example included three notes total, but you can also have four.

**C MAJ<sup>7</sup>**

A musical staff in G clef and 4/4 time. It shows a sequence of four notes: a quarter note on G, an eighth note on A, a sixteenth note on B (the sharp), and a half note on C. There is a repeat sign followed by a half note on D. The staff ends with a double bar line.

This one is targeting the **3rd** of Cmaj7 (E), and is approached diatonically from above (G), diatonically from below (D), and chromatically from below (D#). As you should already know, the 3<sup>rd</sup> is an important guide tone, so this going to make for a strong sounding resolution.

Let's take a look at another. This is an example of enclosure that uses the **target note twice**.

**C MAJ<sup>7</sup>**

A musical staff in G clef and 4/4 time. It shows a sequence of four notes: a quarter note on G, an eighth note on A, a sixteenth note on B (the sharp), and another sixteenth note on B (the sharp). There is a repeat sign followed by a half note on D. The staff ends with a double bar line.

This one is both diatonically approached (F) and chromatically approached (D#) by a half step. We'll put this particular enclosure pattern into practice in a second.

So far all of our examples start with an approach from above, but you can also start with an **approach from below**.

**C MAJ<sup>7</sup>**

A musical staff in G clef and 4/4 time. It shows a sequence of four notes: a half note on D, an eighth note on C, a sixteenth note on B (the sharp), and a half note on E. There is a repeat sign followed by a half note on D. The staff ends with a double bar line.

There are many possibilities for enclosure, and as long as you understand the concept, you can continue to come up with different enclosure patterns yourself.

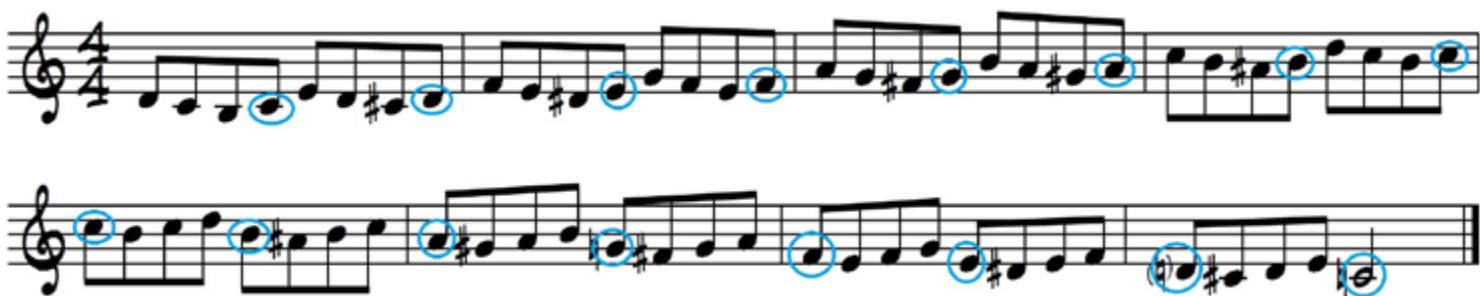
So far we've looked at enclosures over single chords. We'll get to chord progressions in a second, but let's first step back and try applying enclosure to a scale.

In the Scales chapter we went over all of the important scales you should know and we also practiced patterns over them. In that same spirit, we can apply enclosure patterns to **scales**.

### Exercise 51



This is a C major scale with an enclosure pattern that plays the target note twice per scale tone. The first four bars are ascending and the last four are descending. I'll circle the scale tones so you can see the scale clearly.



Notice how the descending scale flips the enclosure on its head. Now the target note is played twice and connected by a chromatic approach tone, and the last note goes up to the next scale degree.

## → PRACTICE CHALLENGE #15

Easier

- Go back to the Scales chapter and pick out three scales (besides the major) and apply the enclosure pattern found in Exercise 51 to them.

Challenging

- Take those three enclosure pattern scales into all 12 keys.

Now let's apply enclosure to a chord progression. We've worked a lot with the ii-V-I so let's use it as an example.

A musical staff in G major (one sharp) and common time. It features three chords: D minor 7 (Dmin⁷), G dominant 7 (G⁷), and C major 7 (CMaj⁷). The notes are written in black ink on white paper. The chords are labeled above the staff: DMIN⁷, G⁷, and CMAJ⁷.

Notice how the 3rds of each chord are being targeted. You already know that the 3<sup>rd</sup> is a strong resolution guide tone.

I want you to notice something else important. What is the 7<sup>th</sup> of Dmin7? **C**. Remember how the 7<sup>th</sup> of a minor 7 resolves so smoothly with the 3<sup>rd</sup> of dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord? Well that's exactly what is happening, except there is a chromatic approach tone in between them.

This is enclosure working alongside of voice lead guide tones!

A musical staff in G major (one sharp) and common time. It features three chords: D minor 7 (Dmin⁷), G dominant 7 (G⁷), and C major 7 (CMaj⁷). The notes are written in black ink on white paper. The chords are labeled above the staff: DMIN⁷, G⁷, and CMAJ⁷. Below the staff, labels indicate the 7th and 3rd scale degrees of each chord, along with a CA (chromatic approach) label. Two blue ovals highlight specific notes: one on the 7th of the G⁷ chord and another on the 3rd of the CMaj⁷ chord.

## **CA= Chromatic approach**

I think you know where I'm going with this next. Let's connect the dots. For this next exercise we are going to stick with these enclosures but fill in the rest of the space with eighth notes.

### **Exercise 52**

D MIN<sup>7</sup>                    G<sup>7</sup>                    C MAJ<sup>7</sup>

The only two differences with this exercise and the previous example is the **target tone is no longer anticipated, and the enclosure into the I chord is up an octave**.

To be very clear, here's the exercise again with the enclosures circled.

D MIN<sup>7</sup>                    G<sup>7</sup>                    C MAJ<sup>7</sup>

Do you see how this ii-V-I came to life? The use of enclosures and chromaticism brought on a new, colorful dynamic. Once you understand this concept and begin to put it into practice in different musical environments, the doors will open wide for your jazz improvisation.

If you followed along with the Guide Tones and Voice Leading chapter, you know what's probably coming next. We need to apply enclosure to a song.

I think a great way to put this to practice is over a blues.

However, I'm going to do something that may frustrate you. It's either going to frustrate you or it's going to invigorate you.

## Exercise 53

C<sup>7</sup>

F<sup>7</sup>

C<sup>7</sup>

F<sup>7</sup>

C<sup>7</sup>

G<sup>7</sup>

F<sup>7</sup>

C<sup>7</sup>

Now you may be thinking: **what is this!? It's just a C blues with nothing in it! What is it?**

I'll tell you what it is. **It's a blank canvas.**

Do you remember at the very beginning of this book, I told you "*This is not your regular music book*"?

Specifically, I told you that throughout this book I would be **calling you to action**. I've kept my promise all the way through. I've given you Practice Challenges and I've asked you to go above and beyond what I've provided on the pages.

It would be easy for me to show you a blues with enclosure, and how I connected the dots. **But why should I do it when you are now perfectly capable of doing it yourself?**

You see, if you've been following along from the beginning, you will have all of the tools to be able to create Exercise 53 for yourself. I know you can do it! I believe you can do it. The answers all lie within the various chapters of this book.

So I couldn't think of a more appropriate way to end this book then by calling you to action one last time.

## → PRACTICE CHALLENGE #16

Easier

- Print this page, or take out some notation paper, and write in enclosures that connect the chords in a C blues. Then go and compose a solo that connects the dots between them. Be able to play it on your instrument.

Challenging

- You guessed it. Take your solo into all 12 keys.

# Final Thoughts

Jazz is social music. It's living, breathing, and constantly evolving. Jazz language is rich and full.

Remember the Jazz Improvisation Rule? **To become a better jazz improviser, you need to understand jazz harmony.**

If you can understand how jazz harmony works, then you can understand how to develop melodies over it.

When you understand scales, you can understand how chord tones can be drawn from them to build chords. When you understand how chords can be harmonized with scales, you can understand how chord progressions work. When you understand how chord progressions work, you can understand the harmonic flow of a jazz standard.

Here's what all of us need to do to become better jazz improvisers:

First and foremost, we need to be listening to the music.

- » We need to be learning licks and solos from jazz musicians we admire.
- » We need to be learning jazz standards.
- » We need to be working on our instruments, and learning how to navigate them.
- » We need to be going out there and playing with others.
- » Becoming a great jazz improviser takes practice. You could literally spend the rest of your life working on the stuff I've provided for you in this book. Musicianship is a journey. Luckily for us, it's a fun one that allows for constant discovery.

Don't ever cease to be dedicated to your craft. Jazz improvement (or improvement of any kind) will never come cheap and easy. **Study hard and enjoy yourself.**

I hope you take everything you've learned from this book, practice it, and then go out there and forget it all. Charlie Parker said it best:

***"You've got to learn your instrument. Then, you practice, practice, practice. And then, when you finally get up there on the bandstand, forget all that and just wail."***

Get out there and play, and when you do play, don't think too hard. Thinking hard is for the practice room, not the band stand.

I wish you the best of luck on your musical journey!

-Brent

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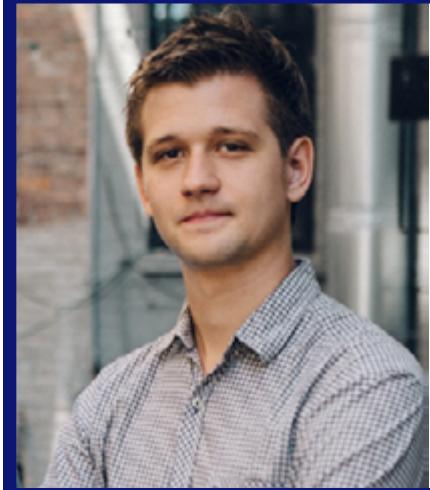
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-Brent

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